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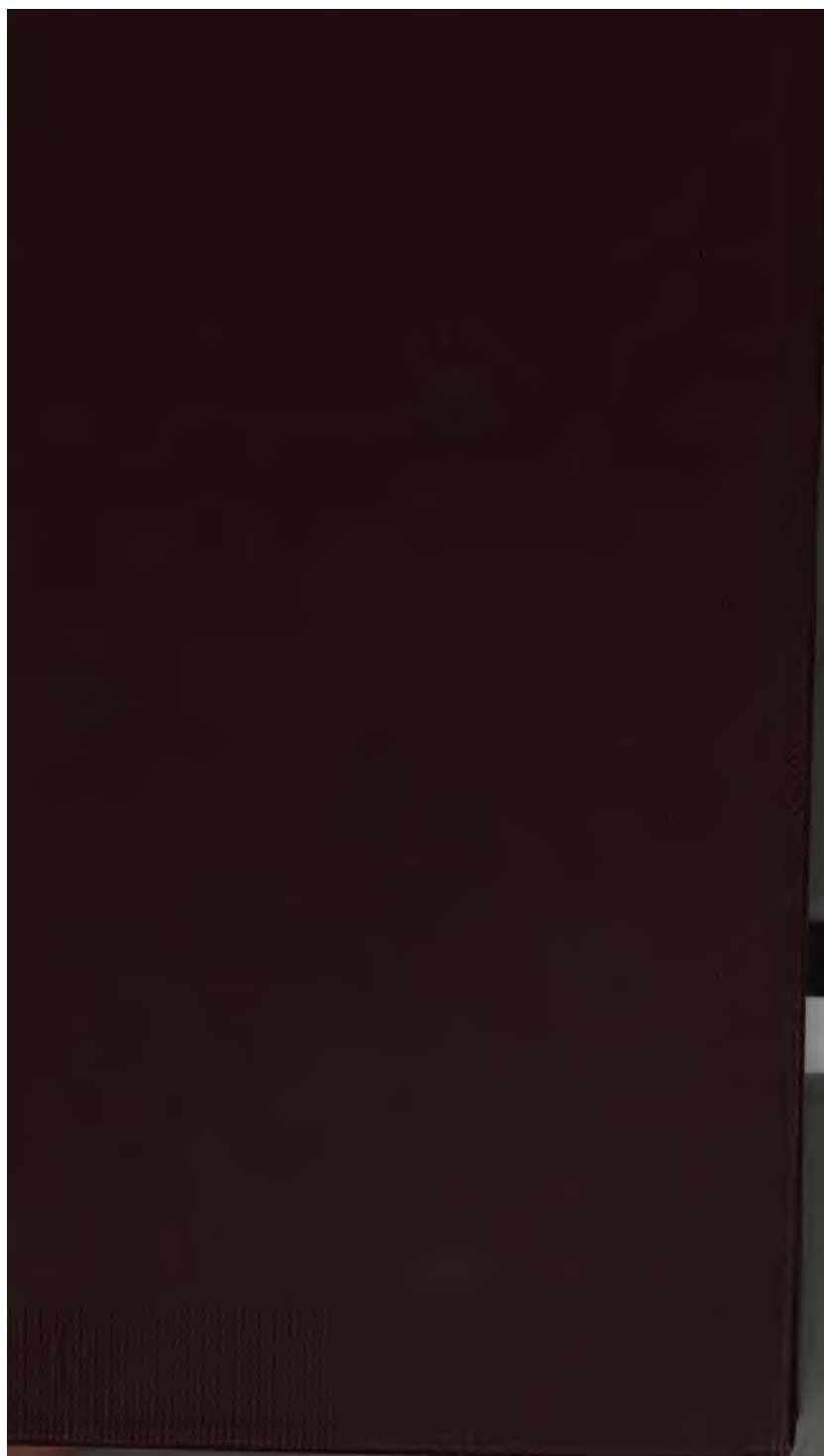
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**A  
VINDICATION  
OF  
CATHOLIC MORALITY.**





A  
VINDICATION  
OF  
CATHOLIC MORALITY,  
OR A  
REFUTATION  
OF THE  
CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST IT BY  
SISMONDI,  
IN HIS  
“HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLICS DURING THE  
MIDDLE AGES.”

BY THE  
COUNT ALEXANDER MANZONI,  
AND NOW  
TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN EDITION OF PARIS, 1834.

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*“Unum gestit interdum ne ignorata damnetur.”*

TERTULL. Apol. Cap. I.

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## PREFACE

BY THE EDITOR.

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IN presenting to the British Public a version of a work, the object of which is to defend the principles of the Catholic Religion, it is obvious that a translator labours under considerable disadvantage. Not to allude to the fact, that treatises of controversy seldom present any thing either agreeable or interesting to the great mass of readers, there is in this case an additional difficulty, arising from the religion and the early prejudices imbibed in their education by the great majority of our countrymen, the effect of which has been to produce a certain abhorrence and suspicion in regard to whatever has any relation with Catholicism. That a work, therefore, professing to combat these prejudices, and to eradicate a conviction, of which many would deem it almost a sin to examine even the foundation, should be received with a certain degree of coldness, is natural ; while on the other



hand, to refuse it an attentive perusal would be neither consistent with justice, nor becoming the liberality of the age in which we live. Assuredly, it is not worth my while to reason with those who are the victims of a heartless frivolity ; who can feel no interest in examining any of those great questions, upon the solution of which mankind have in all ages believed their welfare to depend ; who condemn without examination, and approve without a reason ; whose whole mind is absorbed in material pursuits, or in the base enjoyment of animal pleasures. To awaken such as these, no voice of mine could aught avail ; a power less than almighty could never raise them from the stillness of moral death, to which the fever of their passions has brought them. But there are others, who, though they disapprove of the cause I advocate, feel quite as much as I could wish the immense importance of coming to a right conclusion concerning it. To such as these I appeal, these I implore to enter into discussion with me : a discussion, not of angry words, not of personal abuse ; a discussion, springing not from a desire of obtaining a paltry victory over an antagonist, still less from that wretched fondness for debate, that leads some to argue upon every subject—to spend time, perhaps, or to exhibit a certain logical skill—but from a profound desire to elicit truth, from an awful sense of individual responsibility, and from a sincere regard for the happiness and the welfare of mankind. If, when interrogated as to the possession of such feelings as these, their hearts respond in affirmation, gladly

shall submit the following pages to their judgment : I shall feel that the pains I have bestowed upon them have not been thrown away ; and I shall console myself with the reflection, that I may have assisted a fellow-creature in his earnest and sincere enquiry after truth.

But the discussion, upon which we are about to enter, is not only one of immense importance, one of paramount duty, it involves also questions of the highest and most delightful interest at the present moment. It is now three hundred years since the Catholic Religion was banished from this kingdom, as it was from many other kingdoms of Europe : and what has been the result ? I do not ask what has been the moral result upon the religious and social condition of men ; that inquiry would lead me into a field far too wide for us to traverse at present ; but what has been the result as to the conviction of men ? Is it clearly established, that the Catholic Religion is an antiquated system of superstition or delusion, or has that faith obtained a triumph ? Was the Reformation an effort of a truly enlightened mind, to throw off a mass of corruption, with which the beauty and simplicity of the Christian Church had been defiled, or has it been proved to have been a guilty act of rebellion, the offspring of an ignorant and unstable judgment, the discovery of which has placed the claims of Catholicism in a more prominent and secure position than they ever occupied before ? These are interesting and important

questions, and I answer without fear, not of contradiction but of refutation, that so far from the assertions of our enemies being borne out by facts, the Catholic Faith has taken even a deeper root in the conviction and affection of mankind, than at any previous period since the commencement of Christianity ; its claims upon their approval and assent, have been fixed on a basis no less apparent than solid. In making this assertion, I might with propriety show that it holds good as to every country in the world ; I might show that Catholicism is in a *most* flourishing condition in France, in Belgium, and in Italy ; countries, in all of which it has been exposed to fierce persecution within the last forty or fifty years. I might detail its revival in the East, after that long night of black trial which the great Mahometan apostasy brought upon so many of the most fruitful provinces of God's Church ; I might point to the very remarkable fact, that just as Mahometanism is withering away, the Catholic faith in those countries is regaining its long-lost sway ; thereby sweeping away all those absurd theories, by which Protestant commentators on Prophecy had endeavoured to prove that what they chose contemptuously to term "*the Papacy*," formed one limb of Antichrist, while Mahometanism constituted the other ; that the two powers had arisen together, and that the same epoch was destined to witness their downfall. I might dispense with reasoning, when I could point to the Catholic monarchy of Greece rising on the ruins of Turkish barbarism and oppression ; and when I be-



held the armies of Russia, professing, as they do, every point of faith controverted by Protestants in harmony with the Roman Church, ready to restore the throne of the Eastern Cæsars on that seat which has been too long profaned by Mohammed ; I might even traverse the East, to glory in the triumphs which our invincible faith has lately won in Armenia, in Syria, in India, in China ; but blessed be God, our own country furnishes quite enough to animate and console the faithful Catholic ; quite enough to induce all sincere men, even amongst those who are so unhappily separated from us, to pause before they condemn that Church of which we are the members ; that Church to which their ancestors as much as our own gloried to belong. That the Catholic Religion now occupies a position in this empire which it never before held since the reign of Elizabeth, is a fact so notorious, that no one can call it in question. It was about the period of the French Revolution that Almighty God, in his inscrutable counsels, ordained that the chains, which had until then oppressed the Catholic Church in England, should be broken off. He who holds in his hand the hearts of princes, moved his Most Gracious Majesty King George the Third, in conjunction with both Houses of Parliament, to repeal that cruel code of laws by which his Majesty's Catholic subjects were forbidden to exercise their holy religion. By degrees the priests came out of their hiding-places, our nobles and our gentry began once more to hold up their heads ; encouraged by the benignity of this new Cyrus, they

began to collect the scattered stones of our ruined Sion ; they even dared to attempt the rebuilding of the temple of God. In a very few years, no less than eight Catholic Colleges were founded in England, to say nothing of Scotland, nothing of Ireland. Chapels too were raised in almost all our principal towns; and what is more wonderful still, convents were founded, in which virgins consecrated to the Lord, night and day chaunted the divine praises. The French Revolution meanwhile had scattered the flock and smitten the shepherds in the Most Christian kingdom : while it purified the Church there, it sent forth a crowd of holy priests, who, constant to their God, preferred banishment to the rights of citizenship, in a state where they could only be purchased by the denial of Jesus Christ ; they sought in foreign climates that protection which it was vain to expect at home. " When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another," was the advice of our divine Redeemer ; and the whole history of the Church exhibits a succession of cases in which this counsel has been followed. Hence there is no instance of a persecution which has not tended to propagate the faith : the martyrdom of those who died for religion confirmed it at home, while the generous devotion of those who preferred banishment to apostacy, enabled them to extend the kingdom of their Redeemer abroad : and what is more remarkable still, there has never been a persecution, when there has not been also some friendly asylum provided by God in some foreign clime for his suffering children. And



to mark his divine power in characters still more striking, this asylum has often been prepared amongst those who, to all human expectation, would have seemed the least likely to afford it. There are, perhaps, no examples of what I have just stated more splendid than those which the persecutions of the last fifty years have exhibited. When an impious faction, whose aim it was to overthrow the Religion of Christ and the very frame of society, had obtained, in the inscrutable ways of Providence, that decree, from the centre of Catholic Unity, which doomed to destruction that most sacred band of the soldiers of the Church, the Society of Jesus: it was not in any Catholic kingdom these holy men found a refuge; it was amongst Greek schismatics in Russia that the Almighty provided it. When the venerable Pontiff Pius VI. had expired, the victim of a malice quite infernal, and when the infidel armies of France held possession of Italy, so that to hold a conclave for the appointment of a successor was a thing impossible, no Catholic power was found to remedy the evil: but the arm of the Almighty was not shortened; he sent forth the Russian General Suwarrow; in six weeks not a French soldier remained to impede the proceedings of the Church; the conclave was held at Venice, and the expences were furnished by Protestant England! Pius VII. was elected, but he found the tiara a thorny crown. Hardly was he seated in the chair of Peter, when Napoleon overthrew his temporal sovereignty. The saintly Bishop of the Catholic Church

was thrown into a dungeon ; from one prison he was dragged to another ; he drank the cup of affliction to the dregs : but it was reserved for the armies of Protestant England, of Protestant Prussia, and of schismatical Russia, to restore him to his sovereign rights. In the same way, it was not a Catholic land that afforded a place of refuge for the persecuted clergy of France : it was for England that this honour was destined. Yes, honour, immortal honour to our beloved country, for the noble and generous hospitality she proffered to those valiant confessors of the faith !

But was this heroic act of charity to remain unrequited ? Was it in vain that Christ had declared, that a cup of cold water presented to his thirsty disciple should not fail to have its reward ? that he would regard the deed of love offered to one of his members, as done to himself ? No : Truth itself cannot deceive. The justice of God, an attribute so full of terror to the wicked, affords motives of infinite consolation to the good. Our Lord sees all that which is done for himself, and he does not resemble the ungrateful children of this world ; he rewards to the utmost possible extent every such thought word, and work. Oh, ravishing thought ! would to God that it might open the eyes of our souls to behold his infinite beauty. This divine justice forgot not the bounty of England towards his Church : God crowned her arms with success ; he raised her name to the highest point of honour and glory. But he did more : he began to

withdraw the veil from before her eyes ; that veil, that for three centuries had obscured the light of truth. Yes, he began to remove the judicial blindness, which the sins of our forefathers had drawn down upon their posterity. Once more he permitted the only saving faith of his Catholic Church to be freely proclaimed to the people of England. The virtues of the French clergy, and their zealous labours, did much to remove the prejudices in which a Protestant education had involved our countrymen. How many can trace the first favourable impressions they ever experienced in regard to Catholicism to the sight of these blessed men ! While speaking of them, it would be the deepest ingratitude in the writer of this Preface, not to acknowledge that it was to a holy French priest that he owed the light of divine faith. Great was the prejudice with which he regarded that zealous man, when first they beheld each other ; but this prejudice, each hour of mutual intercourse tended to dissipate. The beams of Catholic light brightly shone from him, as he proceeded on in his even and unbending course : his arguments were works rather than words ; and the youth, as yet untaught the sophistries of a false philosophy, beheld, and acknowledged in his apostolic conduct, the character of a true minister of Christ, and an overpowering evidence of his divine consoling faith. Filled with admiration, but with doubt, he spared no effort to investigate the truth. Amid the maze of controversy, and the perplexity in which each new discovery involved him, his friend-



ship with the holy man served as a conducting star, that never left him until it had safely guided his feet to the humble crib of the Redeemer, whom he found as the shepherds of old, in the arms of his blessed Mother.—He embraced the Faith. How gladly would he have run to convey in person the joyful tidings to his saintly friend ! but circumstances beyond his control interposed to prevent it ; a great distance intervened, to pass which was not in his power. The venerable priest meanwhile had well nigh reached the end of his course ; he had fought the good fight ; he lay upon that bed from which he was never more to rise. As he lay, he thought him of that great account he was so soon about to render for the exercise of his sacred ministry ; that ministry, in which it behoved him to reconcile sinners to God. He thought of all those with whom he had spent hours of friendship, and of sweet intercourse : had they profited by his example ? had the work of his mission been fulfilled in them ? had he never been backward in declaring to them the truth ? could he resign his soul into the hands of his Creator, with the hope of carrying but one strayed sheep to the feet of his Judge ! Doubtless in the great accounting day many, yes, many such, will proclaim him to have been their faithful shepherd. But assuredly, it is not alone the unworthy pastor who trembles at the hour of death ! There is a fear that springs from humility, no less than from the consciousness of guilt : his hope was therefore mingled with fear. But it is not the way of that

Divine Being, who has declared himself the God of all consolation, to leave his faithful servants without comfort in their last trial. It was then, in a moment of this humble dread, that God cheered up the venerable priest; a letter arrived from his young friend, recounting in grateful expressions his conversion to the Faith. The old man read it with eagerness: he pressed it to his heart: he shed a flood of tears, but they were tears of joy and of consolation: he clasped his hands, he raised his dying eyes to heaven, blessing that God whom he had never forsaken, whom he had served alike in prosperity and adversity. "I die contented," he exclaimed; "thou hast made my friend a Catholic Christian; I die contented!" These were almost the last words his attendant heard him utter. The following night he departed to our Lord.

Without hesitation, therefore, I assert, that never since the era of what is called the Reformation has the controversy between Protestantism and Catholicism assumed so interesting a complexion; never has it come so home to every breast; never was it so imperative on each individual to make a decision as to his own line of conduct. Under these circumstances, I think I need no apology for presenting to the English public a work which may tend to elucidate questions on which the minds of so many are now earnestly engaged. With regard to the work itself, it was written by the well-known Manzoni, about four years ago, in vindication of the Moral Doctrines of the Catholic Church from the charges brought against them by the



celebrated Sismondi, in his History of the Italian Republics during the Middle Ages. Having mentioned the name of Manzoni, it would seem superfluous to say any thing to recommend to the notice of the reader a work coming from the pen of such a writer as the author of the "*Promessi Sposi*," a romance, which is as superior to any thing of Sir Walter Scott in its tendency to improve and exalt the mind and heart, as it is equal to his most perfect compositions in point of style and genius. Those who are acquainted with the admirable romance I allude to, and with the other works and poetical pieces composed by Manzoni, will be prepared to expect the consummate talent with which he has treated the several questions discussed in the work before us: they will be no less delighted to find, that not only his talent, but his poetic feeling and his profound observation, every where shine forth in this book; controversy, conducted by him, has no longer any thing of the tedious or the dry, for he seems to have invested reasoning, the most abstract and metaphysical, with all the charms and graces of which a work of the deepest feeling is susceptible.

Whether the translator has done justice to the admirable book which he has endeavoured to present in an English version, is quite another question. That is one upon which it is not for him to pronounce; it is one which he leaves to the indulgence and the courtesy of his readers to answer: of both the one and the other he feels that he has great need, and he only hopes that

his undertaking may not be pronounced altogether a failure. Those who could read the work in its original language, would feel no desire to peruse it in a translation, for they know how difficult it is for the most skilful translator to do justice to his subject ; but if the ideas, the sentiments, and the arguments of an author, are presented in their full force to those readers who are unacquainted with the original language, the task of a translator may be acknowledged to have been accomplished, even though he fail to transfuse into the translation all the accidental beauties of the original. If that has been done in the present case, any pains bestowed will have been amply recompensed. I will say no more ; I only hope my poor recommendation will not have indisposed any one from forming a closer acquaintance with a work, the perusal of which, I am quite confident, cannot fail to gratify and to improve him who reads it.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

---

THE object of this work is to defend the morality of the Catholic Church from the charges brought against it in the 127th chapter of "The History of the Italian Republics during the Middle Ages," published by Sismondi.

The attempt is there made to prove that the alleged corruption of Italy was partly derived from this system of morality. I am convinced that this system is the only holy and reasonable one, and that corruption arises from not knowing it, from disobeying it, or from misunderstanding it, and that it is impossible to find one valid argument against it: and I have here brought forward my reasons for not considering as such any of those adopted by the celebrated author of that history.

A feeble, though sincere apologist for a system of morality, whose end is love,—persuaded that the feeling of benevolence that glows in the heart of a

simple man, is nobler and more important than the loftiest and most sublime conception that springs from the mind of a profound thinker ; persuaded that when we find a disparity between the opinions of another and our own, we ought to cherish feelings of esteem and affection for him, precisely because our corrupt inclinations might unjustly lead us to the contrary, it will certainly be contrary to my intention if I have not observed the most scrupulous respect towards the author in this little work : I trust, however, that I have done so, and I protest beforehand against any unfavourable interpretation of my words.

But I feel, nevertheless, that to every work of this kind there is a sort of odium attached, which it is difficult to remove entirely. To take the book of a justly celebrated living writer, to repeat his sentences, to stop and examine them one by one, and attempt to show that he is wrong in almost all, affecting the critic at every passage, is a thing which, in the long-run, is almost sure to leave an impression of presumption, and of a mean, arbitrary spirit of disputation. To prevent this impression, I shall not say to the reader every time I

venture to contradict, Am I not right? for I know and feel that the being right is not, for the most part, sufficient to justify an attack, still less to ennoble it; but I will say, consider the nature of the argument. This is not an abstract discussion, but a deliberation: it ought to lead us not to receive one set of notions rather than another, but to choose a line of conduct; for if the morality taught by the Church should lead to corruption, we ought to reject it. This is the consequence the Italians would deduce from the reflections which I am about to refute. I hold that this consequence would be the greatest misfortune for my countrymen, and when I feel that I have a deliberate opinion on such a question, it is my duty to declare it, for no duty is beneath us.

The reader will find sometimes that the confutation embraces more than the article confuted: in this case I beg of him to observe that I do not intend to attribute more to the author than what he has expressly said; but I thought that the only way to arrive at an useful result, was to take a more general view of the question, and instead of defending only that part of an article of morality which



was controverted, to show the reasonableness of the whole, since that is the question on which it is important to form an opinion, and it is that which we must admit or refuse entirely. I have done this the more willingly, because it should clearly appear that my object is to establish important truths, and that confutation is an object altogether subordinate.

It appears to me uncourteous, though not perhaps unjust, to notice what we conceive to be error in a work of great magnitude and importance, without alluding to its merits; it is representing a thing that has various aspects only in one point of view, and that one unfavourable. As I only quote the "History of the Italian Republics," to contradict a part of it, I am anxious briefly to express my esteem for so many other portions of a work, the least merit of which consists in the laborious and correct researches, which constitute the greatest merit in various others of a similar kind; a work which is original on a subject that has been so often discussed; original, I say, because it is treated as all histories ought to be, but as very few are treated. It is too often the case, that we read in the most celebrated historians

descriptions of long periods of time, with a succession of various and important facts, yet we find hardly any thing but the changes they produced in the interests and miserable policy of a few men: nations are almost excluded from the history. The mode of treating it, already adopted by some writers, taking as their ground-work the manners and customs of nations, their mode of government, and the moral effects of their legislation, has been applied in Sismondi's history to a vast and complicated argument, kept, however, within fair and just proportions. The facts are well connected as to time and character, so that we can easily and distinctly confront them with the theories that include them all: and these are extensive enough without falling into that indeterminate and general character which puts the historian out of the reach of criticism, because it makes it almost impossible to find out his mistakes, although it leaves the reader uncertain whether he has been perusing a true and important observation, or an ingenious hypothesis. Without concurring in all the opinions of our author, we cannot but perceive how many questions of politics, jurisprudence, and lite-



nature, he has considered frequently in a new and interesting, and what is more important, in a noble and generous point of view: how many truths he has re-established, which had fallen into a species of oblivion through the indolence or base connivance of historians, who too often condescended to justify the abuse of power, and flattered even the dead. He has almost always endeavoured to transfer public esteem from success to justice; and the attempt is so excellent, that it is every man's duty to give him his suffrage, however weak it may be, that he may have numbers with him, if nothing else, in a cause which has always needed support. I state, however, distinctly, that I differ from the author in every case in which he dissents from the faith, and from catholic morality, for I hold these to be an infallible rule, and after a minute examination of each, I am convinced that truth is on their side.

Whoever has long and seriously studied the Holy Scriptures, the fountain of morality, and has carefully read the great catholic moralists, and meditated on himself and others, far removed from the noise of the world, will find these '*Observations*' superficial; and I am very far from objecting to

this judgment, for I know they are so. Although partial discussions may bring some detached truth to light, yet the evidence, the beauty, and the profound depth of catholic morality are fully displayed only in treatises in which the divine law, and man, for whom it was made, are considered in all their mutual relations. In such a view as that the mind goes on from one truth to another; the unity of revelation is such, that the least part becomes a proof of the whole, by the wonderful subordination discovered throughout; difficult things mutually explain each other, and from many paradoxes results an evident system. That which is, and that which ought to be, the misery and corruption of our nature, and yet the idea of perfection and of order that we find ever living equally in all of us, good and evil, the words of divine wisdom, and the vain discourses of mortals, the wakeful joy of the just, the sorrows and the consolations of the penitent, the terrors or the headlong course of the wicked, the triumphs of justice and those of injustice, the designs of men brought to their accomplishment amid a thousand obstacles, or overthrown by a single unforeseen obstacle, the faith that expecteth the

promise, and that feeleth the vanity of what passeth away, even unbelief itself—all are explained by the Gospel, and all confirm the truth of the Gospel : the revelation of a passed state, of which man carries within his own breast the sad testimony, without possessing of himself either the tradition or the secret of it, and that of a future, of which there but remained to us a vague idea of terror and desire ;—this it is, that makes clear to us the things we behold : mysteries reconcile contradictions, and the visible is explained by the invisible.

The more we examine this religion, the more we see it is that which has revealed man to man, and that it supposes in its founder the most universal, thorough, and prophetic knowledge of every sentiment we have. When I read the works of the great Catholic moralists, such as the sermons of Massillon and Bourdaloue, or the writings of such men as Fénelon or Bossuet, I feel the insignificance of the observations contained in the present volume, and I am sensible of the advantages which the authority of the priesthood gave to them, aided as it was by a commanding genius, a long course of study, and a purely Christian life.

The apologists of the Catholic religion are treated with singular injustice : a favourable ear is always lent to whatever is said against them, but when they endeavour to reply, they are told that their cause is not interesting enough, the world has something else to think about, and the time for theological controversy is gone by. Our cause is not interesting !—but we have a proof of the contrary, in the eagerness with which objections have always been received against it. It is not interesting !—when, in all the questions that concern a man most deeply, it presents itself so naturally, that it is easier to reject than to forget it. It is not interesting !—yet there is no age that does not furnish monuments of a profound veneration, a prodigious love, and of an ardent and unwearied hatred in regard of it. It is not interesting !—when the void that its removal would leave in the world is so horrible and immense, that the greater number of those who will not receive it themselves, say it is a good thing for the people, that is, for nine-tenths of the human race. Our cause is not interesting !—and yet it remains to be decided, whether millions of men should abandon the morality they pro-



fess, or study it more, and observe it more faithfully.

It is thought by many that this carelessness is the result of mature deliberation, and of a state of high civilization, which is to be the last and most terrible enemy to religion ; but, on the contrary, this enemy is the first it meets with in its marvellous career.

No sooner had it made its appearance, than it was despised by the world, and considered not worth examining. The Apostles, in the tranquil extasy of the Spirit, revealed truths which were to become the meditation, the consolation, and the light of the sublimest intellects, and to lay the basis of a civilization which was to extend its dominion not only over Europe, but over the entire universe, and they were called drunkards. (Acts ii. 13.) St. Paul caused to be heard, in the Areopagus, words of wisdom that have rendered the humblest Christian so superior to the sages of heathenism, and the sages replied, they would hear him at another time. (Acts xvii. 32.) They thought they had more important things to reflect on than God and man, than sin and redemption. If this enemy still lives,

it is because the Church was promised not that she should destroy all her enemies, but that she should not be destroyed by them.

To speak of dogmas, of rites and sacraments, in opposition to the faith, is called philosophy ; but if we speak of them in defence, it is called a theological dispute, acting the part of an ascetick or a preacher ; and it is pretended that the discussion then assumes a miserable and pedantic character. Yet we cannot defend religion without justifying what is condemned in it, and without showing the importance and reasonableness of that which forms its essence. When we speak of Christianity, we must not leave out the sacraments. Why should we be ashamed to confess the things on which our hopes are placed ? Why should we not bear testimony, in the time of youth, and in the vigour of our days, to those things that we shall call upon to aid us at the moment of death and terror ?

But I am beginning a defence, and anticipating censures that have not, and perhaps will not, be made. It would be ridiculous pride in me to attempt to give this little work the interest which belongs to the cause which it undertakes to defend.

I hope I have written it with right intentions ;  
and I now give it to the public with the tranquillity  
of one who is persuaded that it may be sometimes  
a man's duty to speak for the truth, though it be  
not always in his power to secure its triumph.

# OBSERVATIONS

ON

## CATHOLIC MORALITY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### ON UNITY OF FAITH.

“ L’UNITÉ de foi, qui ne peut résulter que d’une  
“ asservissement absolu de la raison à la croyance, et  
“ qui en conséquence ne se trouve dans aucune autre  
“ religion au même degré que dans la Catholique, lie  
“ bien tous les membres de cette église à recevoir les  
“ mêmes dogmes, à se soumettre aux mêmes décisions,  
“ à se former par les mêmes enseignemens.”—*Hist.  
des Repub. Ital.* tome xvi. p. 410.

THAT unity of faith, which is found in the highest degree, that is in absolute perfection, in the Catholic Church, is an evangelical mark which she claims; for she has not invented this unity, but received it; to pass over many passages in



the scriptures wherein this is taught, I shall quote one in which is found not only the thing itself but the express words:—St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, after having mentioned various gifts and offices which are in the Church, asserts that the end of them is, “the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God.” (Ephes. iv. 13.)\*

Our author does not state the reasons why he thinks that unity of faith can only result from the absolute subjection of reason to belief. If it were so, we could not reconcile the passage just quoted from St. Paul, and another, where he expressly affirms that there is “one faith”,† with that in his epistle to the Romans, where he says, “your service is reasonable.”‡ But not only do these passages agree, but they also explain and confirm each other.

Faith certainly includes the subjection of reason, and this submission is desired by reason itself; for acknowledging certain principles to be incontestable, it is placed in this alternative, either to believe certain inevitable consequences which it does not understand, or to renounce those principles; having acknowledged that the Christian religion is

\* *Donec occurramus omnes in unitatem fidei, in agnitionem Filii Dei.*—Ad Ephes. iv. 13.

† One Lord, one faith, one baptism.—*Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma.*—Ad Ephes. iv. 5.

‡ *Rationabile obsequium vestrum.*—Rom. xii. 1.

revealed by God, it cannot doubt any part of that revelation: the doubt would not only be irreligious, but absurd. But let us suppose for a moment that unity of faith were not expressed in the Scriptures; even then the reason which has received faith ought to adopt unity: there is no necessity for submitting itself to belief to do this, as it would follow from a logical necessity.

Faith consists in the assent given by the understanding to revelation, as coming from God. I believe that the author, when he used the word faith, applied this idea to it, as it is impossible to attach any other. Now, it is repugnant to reason to suppose that God should reveal things inconsistent with each other—if truth is one, faith ought to be one also, because it is founded on truth. The connection of these ideas is clearly shown in the text quoted above, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” From the unity of God necessarily results the unity of faith, and from this the unity of what is essential in his worship. Bacon appeared to hold this as a fundamental truth, when he said: “Among the attributes of the true God it is numbered that he is a jealous God; wherefore his worship does not allow of either mixture or association.”\*

\* Inter attributa autem veri Dei ponitur quod sit Deus zelotypus; itaque cultus ejus non fert mixturam, nec consortium.—*Franc. Baconis Sermones Fideles III., de unitate Ecclesiæ.*

The ideas of faith and plurality are so repugnant, that words are wanting to express their union ; we can justly say different religions, opinions, or religious beliefs, but not different faiths. By religion is meant a body of traditions, precepts, and ceremonies, and it is easily seen that of these there may be more than one. So, in opinions, we consider rather the persuasion of the person who believes, than the truth of the thing believed. But by faith is meant a persuasion founded on divine revelation ; and although people of various forms of worship believe that their opinions have this foundation, we have no expression in our language to signify the co-existence of several revelations, because reason knows it to be impossible. Many persons of different religions may think they have faith ; but a man cannot admit that they all have it. If this is a grammatical quibble, let it be so, as the simple argument by which it is proved that unity of faith supposes no other subjection of reason than to the laws of ratiocination, is quite sufficient.

I do not mean to say, however, that faith results from reasoning alone : it is also a sentiment of the heart ; and on that account it is called by the Church a virtue. This quality is denied to it by Voltaire in the article ' Vertu ' in his Philosophical Dictionary, in a short dialogue ; but the appellation



he has given to one of the speakers shews a great want of courtesy, and an absence of that calmness with which philosophical subjects should be examined. "Un honnête homme" maintains against "un excrément de theologie," that faith is not a virtue, with this argument: "Est-ce vertu de croire? Où ce que tu crois te semble vrai, et en ce cas il n'y a nul mérite à le croire; où il te semble faux et alors il est impossible que tu le croies."

It is difficult for any one to make a more superficial observation than this one of Voltaire. In order to exclude from faith all co-operation of the will, he considers it nothing but the conclusion of the understanding which acknowledges a thing to be true or false. He regards this conclusion as a necessary consequence from the proofs brought forward, not admitting any other power to determine it than the proofs themselves. He considers the mind, in fact, as a mere passive instrument, on which probabilities work conviction or disbelief, as if the Church had said that faith were a virtue of the intellect. It is a virtue in man, and in order to see how it is so, we must observe the share that the whole moral man has in receiving or rejecting it. Voltaire puts aside two important features: the act of the will which determines the mind to examine, and the disposition of the mind which has so much influence in admitting or rejecting the motives of

belief, and consequently belief itself. As to the former, the truths of faith are in many parts so opposed to pride and the sensual appetites, that the mind feels a kind of fear and horror of them, and seeks for something to distract it, which, in fact, leads it away from those enquires that would bring it to discover what it does not wish to find. Every one will recognise this disposition in himself when he reflects on the great activity of the fancy in seeking a variety of subjects to occupy its attention when the mind is engrossed by disagreeable ideas. The desire to place the mind in an agreeable situation has such a manifest influence on those operations of the fancy, that when an idea presents itself to us which we know to be important, but on which we do not like to dwell, we are apt to say to ourselves, I will not think of it; and we do say so, although we are convinced that putting it off will only be a source of trouble to us at a future time: so great is our desire to exclude any painful sensation *now*. This seems to me to be one of the reasons why writings which have combated religion with ridicule have been so much in vogue, as they encourage a disposition common to mankind, by associating to weighty and pressing ideas, a series of ideas opposed to them and diverting. This inclination being in the mind, the will exercises a difficult act of virtue by applying it to the

examination of religious truths; and the mere determination to make this examination supposes not only an impression of probability received, but a holy fear of the divine judgment, and a love of those truths which overcome, or at least combat worldly inclinations.

That the love or dislike of what is proposed for belief has a powerful influence on the mode of examining it, and on the admission or exclusion of proofs, is a known fact which is proved daily. Suppose any news arrives in a city which has the misfortune of being unhappily divided into factions; it is believed by some and disbelieved by others according as it affects their passions or interests. Fear acts on belief as well as hope; sometimes inducing it to refuse credence to any thing that threatens it, and at others persuading it to give more faith than it deserves, which often happens where there is a way opened to avoid it.\*

\* I think that J. J. Rousseau is wrong when he ridicules those who admire Alexander's courage in drinking the medicine brought to him by his physician Philip, after he had received a letter from Parmenio, advising him to beware of the physician who had been corrupted by the gifts and promises of Darius, and had engaged to take away his life. Rousseau says in the second book of *Emile* that this anecdote being related at table by a boy, many persons blamed Alexander for his rashness, while others admired his firmness and courage. To which the boy replied, that it seemed to him, that if there were the least firmness or courage in this act of Alexander's, it was no more than an extra-



It is on this account that expressions like the following are so common ;—*examine candidly ; judge without prejudice, dispassionately, calmly ; do not suffer yourself to be led away with, &c. ;* which signify freedom of the judgment from the passions. The strength of mind which maintains this liberty, is doubtless a virtuous disposition ; it is derived from a love of truth, independent of any pleasure or pain that may be produced on the

vagance. As they all agreed it was an extravagance, Rousseau was getting warm and about to answer, when a lady near him whispered softly in his ear. “Tais toi, Jean-Jaques, ils ne t'entendront pas.” The company did not therefore hear the explanation. Rousseau gives it to his readers, but in that angry and mysterious manner which he too often uses, especially in *Emile*, where it seems at times that he wishes them to know that he does not esteem any of them worthy of hearing the truth or capable of understanding it : where he frequently endeavours to make them guess at what might as easily be said plainly and agreeably ; and where, instead of adopting simplicity, perspicuity, and mildness in proportion to the superiority of his genius, he affects with his readers a harsh, imperious, and contemptuous tone, reproving preceptors, as if he had a greater desire to irritate and humiliate mankind than to instruct them. His words are as follows :—“Quelques lecteurs, mécontents du *tais toi*, *Jean-Jaques*, demanderont, je le prévois, ce que je trouve enfin de si beau dans l'action d'Alexandre. Infortunés ! S'il faut vous le dire, comment le comprendrez-vous ? C'est qu'Alexandre croyait à la vertu ; c'est qu'il le croyait sur sa tête ; sur sa propre vie ; c'est que sa grande âme étoit faite pour y croire. Oh ! que cette médecine avalée étoit une belle profession de foi ! Non, jamais mortel n'en fit une si sublime.” In spite of all this I think that courage is the most conspicuous part of this action. A belief in virtue was not sufficient ; it was necessary to believe in the virtue of the physician Philip,

senses. We see, therefore, with what wisdom is the name of virtue given to faith. As the human mind would never have been able of itself to discover many of the truths of religion, if God had not revealed them ; and as our corrupt will has not of itself that power of which we have just spoken ; so faith is called by the Church a virtue, and the gift of God.

Returning from this long digression to the passage in question, I confess I do not clearly under-

and in order to have implicit confidence in it at that moment, it was also necessary calmly to bring to the recollection and judgment some circumstances in favour of his fidelity, and to rest assured that they were more weighty than the probability of such an attempt ; (for Parmenio's letter certainly constituted a probability ; ) it was necessary to have sufficient firmness to prevent the idea that he was about to take poison from disturbing this examination ; in short, to have courage. The feeling that induces a timid person to imagine or magnify danger, is the same that makes him fly from real danger, that is, a fear of death or bodily pain, which overpowers his faculties, and acts as a passion, by taking away tranquillity from his mind. To preserve this tranquillity in the face of real or supposed danger, is the effect of courage. If Alexander had thought it probable that Philip wished to give him poison in his medicine, it would have been the greatest rashness to have taken it ; this is unquestionable ; but if the letter had come into the hands of a cowardly man, it would have put him into such a state of doubt and anxiety, that he would not have reflected, but instantly made up his mind to avoid the risk at all hazards, even though he were persuaded of the virtue of the physician up to that period : he would have made enquiries, examined evidence, had the medicine analysed, arrested the physician, and have done every thing but swallow the draught.



stand the sense of the proposition "that the unity of the faith is not found to exist in any other religion in the same degree as in the Catholic." How can there be degrees in unity of faith? Either these other religions maintain their faith to be true, and will maintain that it alone is true, or they admit the possibility of some other faith, and in that case are not certain of their own, and have not faith. Whenever a religious system approaches the principle of unity, that is, when it excludes from its bosom all opinions contrary to those which it professes, it is because it is sensible of the absurdity of calling one proposition true, and yet receiving another totally opposed to it. Every time a religious system departs from the principle of unity, it is because, not being able to find conclusive arguments to establish the certainty of its faith, it grants to others the same tolerance it requires for itself; it dares not exclude others, because they might on the same principle exclude it.

That the Catholic Church is not subject to these fluctuations, but possesses unity of faith in the highest degree, is a proof of the perpetual certainty of faith to be found in her, and of that immutability which is put forth by Catholics as a character of the truth of the faith which they profess.

## CHAPTER II.

ON THE DIFFERENT INFLUENCE OF THE CATHOLIC  
RELIGION IN VARIOUS TIMES AND PLACES.

“ Toutefois l’influence de la religion Catholique n’est  
 “ point la même en tout temps et en tout lieu ; elle a  
 “ opéré fort différemment en France et en Allemagne de  
 “ ce qu’elle a fait en Italie et en Espagne. Les obser-  
 “ vations que nous serons appelé à faire sur la religion  
 “ de l’Italie ou de l’Espagne, pendant les trois derniers  
 “ siècles, ne doivent point s’appliquer à toute l’Eglise  
 “ Catholique.” Page 410.

To elucidate this point, which, as it will be seen, has not here an importance merely historical, it is necessary to call to mind the design of Chap. 127, a part of which is now under our notice. This is expressed in the title of that chapter : “ Quelles sont les causes qui ont changé le caractère des Italiens, depuis l’asservissement de leurs républiques ? ” Four causes are assigned ; but the first is the only one I propose to discuss, namely, religion. The author, endeavouring to explain how such a cause could operate the above named change, glances at an objection that would naturally be brought

against his argument—from the Unity of Faith, seeing that “it binds,” as he expresses himself excellently well, “all the members of the Catholic religion to receive the same dogmas, to obey the same decisions, and to be taught by the same precepts:” it therefore seems that this religion ought rather to be a cause of conformity among the different nations who profess it, than of dissension. “Yet,” he adds, “the influence of the Catholic religion is not the same in all times and places: it has operated very differently in France and Germany to what it has done in Italy and Spain.”

To account for this diversity of influence, notwithstanding the unity of faith held by all Catholics, I think only three kinds of causes can be found.

I. Rules or customs of discipline, which are no part of faith.

II. Imperceptible and partial alterations of doctrine, or the omission and violation of essential and universal discipline, which, leaving the principle of unity unbroken in theory, may yet induce a nation, or a part of it, either for a longer or shorter time, and either through ignorance or malice, to speak and act as if they had renounced unity.

III. Particular circumstances in history, civilization, interests, or climate, not exactly connected with religion, but so much so with the men who

profess it, that the influence of religion is considerably affected by them, and is either circumscribed, hindered, or promoted amongst some more than amongst others.

If our author had sought under these three heads for the causes of the different effects, which he says religion has produced in Italy, I should have taken care not to argue the point with him; because either his reasons would have seemed to be conclusive, and I should have been glad to have been instructed by him, as I have been in many other parts of his history; or they would not have convinced me, and it would have been one of those cases in which I consider silence to be better than demonstration. But as the causes that he assigns for the pernicious influence of Religion on the Italians, are for the most part not customs and opinions peculiar to themselves, but moral maxims or ecclesiastical rules, revered and cherished by all Catholics as well in France and Germany, as in Italy and Spain, the man who condemns them would at the same time condemn the Catholic Faith, which is a consequence of the utmost importance to prevent.

The author himself, when he repeatedly mentions the Church in the course of his reflections, leaves us in doubt as to whether he intends to attribute to her the doctrine he censures, or merely



to the Church in Italy. It is neither practicable nor useful to arrive at the precise meaning of his words in this case, so I shall content myself with shewing the universality and reasonableness of those rules and maxims which are Catholic.

I shall frequently quote French writers, not only because of their decided superiority in these matters, but because their authority is of great use in shewing that these doctrines are not peculiar to Italy, and if France differs from her, it is in having produced men who have more eloquently—that is, with greater powers of reasoning—supported and defended them.

But the most striking proof of the universality of these moral maxims will be derived from the Scriptures, where they are found for the most part in so many words; so that we may boldly affirm, that they neither are nor can be controverted by Catholics, of whatever nation they may be.

The rules of the Church with regard to morality may be divided into two classes, that is to say :

Decisions on points of morality, which form the testimony of the Church, that she inculcates the morality which was confided to her by Jesus Christ, and no other ; a testimony which obliges the faithful to consent to it : or, laws to regulate

the exercise of the authority conferred on the Church by its Founder ; to apply spiritual remedies, which have their origin in Him alone.

On both these points we may ask the testimony of a Catholic in France and Germany, with the certainty that he will confess that they exist in vigour in both nations. I shall quote, when necessary, the Council of Trent as the most recent and speaking testimony of the uniformity of doctrine, which becomes a proof of its perpetuity.

“ Le Concile de Trent travailla avec autant d’ardeur à réformer la discipline de l’Eglise, qu’à empêcher toute réforme dans ses croyances et ses enseignemens.” \*

No Catholic could express with greater precision and force the firmness of the fathers of that council, in rejecting every idea of reform in faith, as a thing at once impossible and impious.

Now there were bishops from all these four nations at the Council of Trent ; and as they came to it with the evidence of their particular churches on controverted points of faith or morality, so they returned home with the testimony of the Universal Church. Ever since that time, therefore, the Council of Trent has become the guide to which all Catholics have recourse : and in order to prove the faith of all ages, treasured up and interspersed

\* Hist. des Répub. Ital. tom. xvi. p. 183.

in so many councils, they have, in many cases, only to cite that council, which has reproduced, and, so to speak, classed it afresh. The great Bossuet, in his 'Exposition of the Catholic Faith,' appeals to this council as the foundation of all those points of morality and essential discipline, which are censured in the chapter which is the subject of the present observations, and were censured in his own times, although with arguments totally different.

The same Bossuet, in his correspondence with Leibnitz, always rejects the proposition to examine the Council of Trent again, as inadmissible. "*Je voudrois bien seulement vous supplier de me dire, si vous pouvez douter que les décrets du Concile de Trente soient autant reçus en France et en Allemagne parmi les Catholiques qu'en Espagne et en Italie, en ce qui regarde la foi; et si vous avez jamais ouï un seul Catholique qui se crût libre à recevoir ou à ne pas recevoir la foi de ce concile.*"\*

Now the decrees of the Council of Trent regarding morality that will be quoted in these observations relate to points which, by the consent of all Catholics, constitute a part of faith.

As to abuses and popular errors, it is necessary

\* Lettre à M. Leibnitz du 10 Janvier 1692, Œuvres Posth. de Bossuet, tom. i. p. 349.



to state once for all, that they are not to be imputed to the Church, which has neither approved nor sanctioned them. I trust I shall prove that they are not legitimate consequences of the faith or morality of the Church; and if any persons have deduced them from the Church, it is not in her power to prevent false reasoning, or to destroy the logic of the passions. Although these evils seem to me to be less in reality than they are represented, I shall not fail to notice them shortly, but only to defend the Church, upon which it is wished the blame should fall. If any one is determined to believe that these abuses are peculiar to Italy, I shall not take the trouble to turn him from his opinion. Let it be observed, however, that the quotations from French writers will in many places prove quite the contrary to be the fact; and we shall see how they have, while establishing the truths of the Catholic faith, combated the same errors and delusions as existing in France. Would it were not so! for can it ever be a source of national pride to a Christian, to see the Church less lovely in one part of the world than in another?

Wherever the faithful are to be found upright, enlightened, and irreproachable, they are our glory, and we ought to make them our models, if we do not wish them to become one day our condemnation.

## CHAP. III.

ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MORAL PHILOSOPHY  
AND THEOLOGY.

“ Il y a sans doute une liaison intime entre la religion  
 “ et la morale, et tout honnête homme doit reconnoître  
 “ que le plus noble homage que la créature puisse ren-  
 “ dre à son Créateur, c’est de s’élever à lui par ses vertus.  
 “ Cependant la philosophie morale est une science abso-  
 “ lument distincte de la théologie ; elle a ses bases dans  
 “ la raison et dans la conscience, elle porte avec elle sa  
 “ propre conviction ; et apres avoir développé l’esprit  
 “ par la recherche de ses principes, elle satisfait le cœur  
 “ par la découverte de ce qui est vraiment beau, juste, et  
 “ convenable. L’Eglise s’empara de la morale, comme  
 “ étant purement de son domaine.” Page 413.

WHEN Jesus Christ said to his Apostles, “ Go  
 ye therefore and teach all nations . . . . . teach-  
 ing them to observe all things whatsoever I have  
 commanded you,” (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20), he ex-  
 pressly delegated to the Church the teaching of mo-  
 rality.

Men have, it is true, ideas of right and wrong  
 independent of religion, which constitute a moral  
 science. But is this science complete ? Is it that  
 which we ought to adopt ? Is it an essential con-  
 dition, or an imperfection in morality, to be dis-  
 tinct from theology ? This is the question, and to

state it is to explain it. For in fine, it was this imperfect and varying science, in many parts so erroneous, and in all wanting an irremoveable foundation, that Jesus Christ undertook to reform, when he prescribed actions and motives, regulated feelings, desires, and words, when he reduced love and hatred to principles, which he laid down as eternal, infallible, admitting of no exceptions, and universal. He, in a word, formed the union between moral philosophy and theology—was it for the Church to separate them?

Of what does moral philosophy treat? Of our duty towards God and man; of virtue and vice; of happiness: its object is, in a word, to direct our will in selecting our actions. And has moral theology any other aim?—can it have any other? If then they both seek after one truth, discuss the same principles, and apply them to the same actions, how can they be two different sciences? Is it not true, that when they disagree, one of them must be false; and when they say the same thing, they are one science? It is evident that we cannot subtract any thing from the Gospel on moral questions—we must either reject it, or build on it as a foundation. We cannot advance one step without finding it in our way: we may pretend not to use it, or avoid it, by not coming in immediate contact—we may do this in words, but not in fact.



I know that this distinction between moral philosophy and theology is commonly received ; for by means of it so many difficulties are overcome and so many jarring theories are reconciled : but this consent, nevertheless, is not an objection. I am also aware that many distinguished men have adopted it, and even made it the foundation of a part of their system. I will take an example from the work of a man far removed from the common herd : “ Comme dans cet ouvrage je ne suis point théologien, mais écrivain politique, il prenoit y avoir des choses qui ne seroient entièrement vraies que dans une façon de penser humaine, n’ayant point été considérées dans le rapport avec vérités plus sublimes.”—(*Esprit des Lois*, liv. xxiv. chap. 1.) Although these are the words of Montesquieu, they are not the less void of sense ; because, if things be found really true according to a human mode of thinking, they will be true according to any other mode of thinking. That possible contradiction that he supposes between them and more sublime truths either does not exist, or if it exists, will shew the things in question to be not entirely true. If they have any connection with more sublime truths, it is necessary to examine this connection, because it ought to be the criterion of their truth. The illusion that has given rise to this phrase, as well as to so many others, has been already noticed and exposed half a

century ago by that profound and keen observer of the human heart, the celebrated Nicolle. Examining the value of the words so frequently used, 'humanly speaking,' he says: "Il semble, à nous entendre parler, qu'il y ait comme trois classes de sentimens, les uns justes, les autres injustes, et les autres humains; et trois classes de jugemens, les uns vrais, les autres faux, et les autres humains. Cependant il n'en est pas ainsi. Tout jugement est ou vrai ou faux, tout sentiment est ou juste ou injuste; et il faut nécessairement que ceux que nous appelons jugemens et sentimens humains se réduisent à l'une ou à l'autre de ces classes." (*Danger des entretiens des Hommes; première partie, chap. v.*) Nicolle thus reduces the question to its simplest terms, and shews in a masterly manner the reasons why men thus delude themselves. When we say that a thing is true humanly speaking, we do not mean to put it forth as an hypothesis, but consequences are deduced from it as if it were really true. The expression then amounts to this: I feel that the maxim I cherish is opposed to religion—I do not wish to oppose religion, or to abandon the maxim; but not being able to make them logically agree, I adopt a term which leaves the question untouched in the abstract,—to get rid of it, in fact, according to my desires. Whoever asks if it is sufficient that a principle should be true humanly speaking, to regu-

late his conduct by it, proves by his question, that the expression is useless. Why do we never say, "according to the Ptolemaic system?" or, "according to the ancient chemistry?" because in these things no one has an interest in setting out on a false hypothesis.

Without presuming to criticise Montesquieu, it may easily be seen that the use of these expressions, common to so many writers of his time, did not arise from an error in the understanding. The Catholic Religion was at that time maintained in France by force; now by a law, *which will last as long as the world endures*. Force always produces cunning to oppose it;\*

\* The reader will understand that the word *law* is used here to signify, not what ought to be done, but that which men, generally speaking (if they are not sustained by a supernatural principle and strength), do as certainly as if they were compelled by a law. A splendid exception to this is found in the primitive Christians, who, in their combats with persecutors, united in a wonderful degree, sincerity, patience, and resistance.—What divine wisdom in the precept, to avoid persecution! As it can only be escaped by death or apostacy, man ought not to expose himself to a trial so much beyond his strength; but when inevitable, he ought to endure it. According to worldly wisdom, we can hardly imagine a scheme which gives less hope of success, than that which excluded the advantages both of power and cunning, the advantages which are derived from taking time, and deceiving the oppressor: the scheme of Christianity left to its defenders no other alternative when in the presence of an enemy, than to die without injuring him. Every worldly-wise man would have foreboded that this doctrine must infallibly and in a short time, ruin its partisans, unless, taught by experience, they



and those writers who wished to overthrow religion without compromising themselves, did not say that it was false, but endeavoured to establish principles incompatible with it, and maintained that these principles were independent of it. Not daring publicly to demolish the edifice of Christianity, they erected another edifice by the side of it, which, according to their notions, would render it impossible for the former to stand.\*

But this moral philosophy "has its basis in reason and conscience; it carries conviction with it; and after having enlightened the mind by an inquiry into its principles, it satisfies the heart by the discovery of what is truly beautiful, just, and suitable."

Has it a firm foundation? Does it produce an universal and lasting conviction? Does it put forth principles avowed by all who profess it? Does it in all times and places agree in what is beautiful,

changed their mode of propagating it. The marvel is, that this doctrine has been diffused and established by adhering faithfully to these very rules.

\* This chapter was written before I knew that the same subject has been recently discussed by a most respectable vindicator of religion, (*Analisi rasionata de sistemi e de' fondamenti dell' ateismo dell' incredulità. Dissertazione vi. cap. 2.*) I have nevertheless thought it right to leave it as it is, as my object is rather to treat of what is opportune, than what is new; and nothing is more suitable than what relates to a point combated recently by a distinguished writer.

just, and suitable? In this case it may be distinct from theology : it has no more need of it, or rather it will be theology itself.

But if it varies according to times and places, it will not be one, and cannot therefore be put in comparison with religious morality, which is one. Here it will be right to ask, what is this moral philosophy about which so much is said, since undoubtedly there are many systems so called.

There are two leading features in morality ; its principle, and the rules of those actions which are the application of it : the history of moral opinions presents in both the most monstrous variety.

As to such rules, it will be sufficient to recollect the absurd systems of practical morality that have been maintained by whole nations. Locke has quoted an immense number of examples, to prove that there are no rules of morality innate and imprinted naturally on the mind of man.\*

\* (On the Understanding, Book 1. Chap. 2.)—After Locke, some persons wished to deduce a much more ample consequence from these and similar facts, namely, that the sentiment of morality does not exist in man. Helvetius cites many instances to prove that in all ages and in different countries, probity can only be the habit of performing actions useful to our own nation.—Disc. II. Chap. xiii. One writer, in combating with reason and dignity this sophism which confounds the idea of justice with its application, seems almost to disapprove even of inquiry into these facts. *Philosophie de Kant par C. Villers*, p. 378, and more expressly *Mad. de Stael de l'Allemagne*, 3d Part, Chap. 2.

He sought for his examples for the most amongst rude and uncivilized people, but he would not have failed to find them among nations the most cultivated and famed for learning. Did the pagans find in their hearts and minds the true standard of “*Qu'est ce donc qu'un système qui inspire à un homme aussi vertueux que Locke de l'avidité pour de tels faits ?*” But she herself seemed to feel that this was not an objection, as she immediately adds “*Que ces faits soient tristes ou non, pourra-t-on dire l'important est de savoir s'ils sont vrais.*” Thus it is; the only thing we should seek after in facts is truth, and he who is afraid to examine them gives a strong proof that he is not sure of his own principles. But, continues this celebrated lady: “*Ils peuvent être vrais, mais que signifient-ils ?*” They signify that there is no principle of practical morality innate; a truth neither unimportant nor commonly received before the time of Locke, who, by bringing it forward, and proving it, has destroyed an error, and rendered a service to mankind; for there is no moral error which is harmless.

This truth was the thesis of Locke, but it must be confessed that his reasonings seem to lean to the consequences of which we have spoken. He has not deduced them expressly, but he has not prevented them: he has proved that men vary prodigiously in the application of the idea of justice, but he has not observed that they agree in having a general perception that there are things just and unjust, actions praiseworthy and reprehensible. Those persons who after him established this truth, have, I will not say confuted a great error in his system, but have certainly filled up an important vacuum.

But if we confront this truth with that which was discovered by Locke, a third consequence is deduced, which is the necessity of a divine law, in order to have a holy and infallible rule of morality. The universal perception of morality proves the aptitude of man to receive an universal rule for its application: the same finger that indited the law, had previously formed the heart of man to understand and acknowledge it. And the mon-



justice and injustice? Did those Romans, who heard with a shudder that one of their fellow-citizens had been beaten with rods, but thought it an act of common justice to cast alive to wild beasts a fugitive slave, who could not endure the harsh treatment of a cruel master? Without citing other examples, we shall content ourselves with saying, that the ancient historians and moralists abound with them. What, then, is this moral conviction, if it is not inherent in all men? It may be so complete, as to determine a man to commit an action of the greatest atrocity under the persuasion that he is doing right, and prevent him from feeling any remorse after having committed it: this may extend to whole nations, but is nevertheless a false conviction. And in order to shew clearly that it is so, the testimony of religion is not necessary: it will be sufficient that some circumstances should cease, that some interest should change, or some custom be abolished.

As to the principle of morality, the differences are no longer between the Mingrelians, Peruvians,

strous errors of those persons who interpreted it of themselves prove the necessity of this law, and that it is the only one; for all else is confusion and blindness; and the mistakes they make in establishing others are so great, as to cause men, albeit as blind as themselves, to condemn them, when the particular causes have ceased which made them take one error rather than another for the truth.

and Tupinambians—the question is between a few men intent on studying it, and who affect to lay aside all interests, all authority and custom, that they may discover the truth. They agree in admitting there is a principle of morality, and a motive of justice applicable to all the relations of men ; but when they come to point it out, one sees it in interest, another in the idea of duty, and another in conscience ; and 'tis observable, that these discussions are not of a kind to point the road to any agreement, or of such a nature as to make even a step towards a common centre. Such as these have, it is true, a progressive movement, and at every stage there are discovered points of contact which form a part of the science ; some things are agreed upon, which are no longer brought into discussion. But here, on the contrary, different systems fall and rise again, always preserving their characteristic differences—men dispute, and each one reiterates his own arguments, as if they were peremptory ; and he continues to do so, although it be proved that they are not suited to overthrow the opposition of his antagonists : which in fact forms the prevailing character of interminable disputes.\*

\* From time to time, writers are springing up, who ridicule these discussions ; which is the more easy in proportion as they belong to arbitrary systems on the one side, or to the deepest feelings of man on the other—two great sources of ridicule to the

It is then evident that moral philosophy is not a science in itself, that it has no fixed basis, nor greater number of literary men. The very phraseology of different systems furnishes burlesque writers with materials to work upon without much labour. In every system, according to the number of ideas to be classified, it becomes necessary to invent terms which shall express their relation and aspect. These phrases not being in common use, although frequently used by philosophers to adorn a lecture or a treatise, are generally repeated with some importance, because they represent the cardinal ideas of the system; and it suffices but to collect them together in burlesque writing, in order to throw thousands of readers into convulsions of laughter.

Nothing more tends to make men ridicule any thing than to remind them that it is to other men serious and important, for every one thinks it a sign of his own superiority to be diverted at that which occupies and governs the mind of another. We see this daily among men of every sort, for where it is known that one man has a particular attachment to an idea, others make use of it to ridicule him, either by contradicting or agreeing with him, but always in such a manner, that his peculiar partiality shall be displayed as fully as possible; this practice may be easily combined with politeness, which, when separate from religious charity, is rather a rule of warfare than a treaty of peace among mankind.

From the 'Nubes' (a) to 'Faust,' all the positive systems relating to the moral and intellectual part of man have universally fallen, sooner or later, into the hands of comic writers: and the feeling excited by these has been one of merriment, of satire, or of pain in proportion as they have exposed with great success the vanity of particular systems, or the terrible vanity of the human mind; which success depended on the malignity, the vacuity, or the skill of the various writers.

Whenever the *technical* terms of a system have been turned to ridicule, few venture to use them any more; and though

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(a) 'Clouds,' by Aristophanes, to ridicule Socrates.



points of general conviction on which all agree. Even if it were preferred to theological morality, we should be obliged to make a selection from a hundred opposite and incompatible systems into which it is divided, or rather among which it is combated.

There are two irremediable vices which have destroyed, and will from time to time destroy all the systems of human morality: a deficiency of beauty, and a deficiency of motives. For a system of morality to be perfect, it must unite these two conditions in the highest degree; that is to say, it ought not to exclude, but, on the contrary, to the arguments seem set at rest, they almost always re-appear in a different shape. For there exists in man an eager desire to know his own nature, and to find a model with which to compare his own sentiments, to obtain which he wants something beyond jesting.

And here let it be observed, as we proceed: that philosophers dispute less about the rules of actions than on the general principle of morality: they agree for the most part on the former, and every one endeavours, as far as he can, to attach to his own principle those practical rules which are most commonly received. It seems to me that this arises from certain causes, which make men more easily agree in their judgment of actions, such as education and the weighty authority arising from the consent of contemporaries produced by circumstances and common interests; whence, in this case, philosophers are rather guided than guides. Moreover, the influence of Christianity increases and extends this cause; for having forbidden certain actions, which by a corruption of the moral sense, had been held by other people to be good, and having commanded others, it has produced in multitudes a fixed judgment quite independent of arbitrary principles,

propose the finest sentiments and actions, giving at the same time motives to prefer them. Now none of those systems can do this: each of them is, so to speak, obliged to make a selection, and what it gains on one side it loses on the other. If, in order to avoid this difficulty, we recur to a middle system, it will modify the two faults, but will nevertheless have them both. Let us, however, enter into a fuller examination, in order to elucidate this proposition.

In proportion as a system of moral philosophy adapts itself to general opinion, by consecrating some maxims which men have always praised and admired, by preferring what is right to what is pleasing, by self-denial, and doing good without hope of reward or fame, it becomes the more difficult to find in the understanding any reasonable foundation for such doctrine. In fact, if we examine what is the quality in any splendid action that excites our admiration, and makes us denominate it such, we shall find it to be no other than the difficulty (I mean not so much the difficulty of carrying it into execution, which arises from external obstacles, but that which lay in the way of determining to execute it)—the utility and justice of the action will be conditions without which it would not be splendid, but they are not those which make it so. This is so true, that if,

while we are admiring the resolution taken by a man under certain circumstances, any one discovers that it is to his advantage to act thus, and that he was aware of this when he decided on it, our admiration ceases; the resolution will be called good, useful, just, or wise, but no longer admirable or splendid; we say that the man has been fortunate, honest, or penetrating, but no one will call him great. We also see a proof of this given by envy, which, although it cannot deny an action to be good, yet labours to find motives by which it shall appear, that the person who has performed it found it to his advantage, or that it was very easy to do it: and easy undertakings are never admired. But why do the finest actions appear difficult to the greater part of mankind, unless it is because they do not find in reason sufficient motives to undertake them resolutely, but rather find in their self-love motives to the contrary? Hence it follows that the more a system of morality has for its object the beauty of actions, the less will it furnish arguments to prove that it is reasonable to embrace and follow it.

But if a system is founded in mere reasoning, if it does not aim at eliciting from man any other determinations than those which it can prove to him he ought to take for his own temporal advantage, this dissatisfies and offends another feeling



that exists in all men, who will not renounce their esteem for that which is beautiful without being useful, nay, which even is beautiful on that very account. I know that in the theory of morality, founded on interest, all the most magnanimous actions, and those which are most independent of what is called utility, are explained by saying that men of great mind take pleasure in them. But for a moral theory to be complete, it is not enough to explain how some persons may have performed them; it is also necessary for it to give reasons and inducements to perform them: otherwise, the most perfect part of the morality becomes an exception to the rule; it is the inheritance of some men who separate themselves\* from the common mode of reasoning, and is almost an extravagance of taste.\*

There is in men a power which impels them to disapprove of whatever appears to them to be false; and as they cannot disapprove of disinterested virtues, they wish to have a system, into which they

\* The anonymous writer of the life of Helvetius, after having spoken of some of his traits of beneficence, remarks that he said to his servant, who was witness of them: "I forbid you to repeat what you have seen, even after my death." This writer would not recollect such a circumstance, if he were not of opinion that the desire of concealing the good we do is a virtuous disposition. It is so without doubt; but in the system of Helvetius, it is impossible to classify it among the virtues.

enter as reasonable. I think the more we observe, the more we shall see that human morals are agitated between these two points, though we may seek in vain to reconcile them: every system has a part of its foundation in human nature, that is in reason or in sentiment: the difficulty consists in making these two coincide, and in finding a point where they may unite as closely as possible.

This point is to be found in theological morality. Imagine any sentiment of perfection, it is found in the gospel: elevate the desires of the soul purified to the utmost from the passions, to the ideal summit of moral beauty, and they will not go beyond the region of the gospel. And at the same time, we shall not find any feeling of perfection to which with the gospel we cannot assign a motive which is rational, convincing, and naturally allied with the whole of revelation.

Is it beautiful to forgive injuries, to have an immutable, calm, and fraternal heart towards him who hates us?—Who doubts it? But why should I possess this, if every day draws me to opposite sentiments? Because you can only hate your brother as the cause of evil to you; if he is not that cause, your hatred becomes unreasonable and unjust; now he has done you no harm; your will alone can really hurt you: he has done himself an injury, and deserves your compassion. If an

offence wounds you, it is because you give to temporal things a value they do not possess; because you do not habitually feel that God is your only good, and that no man nor thing can take him from you. Your hatred, then, arises from the corruption of your own heart; from the wandering of your intellect: purify the one and correct the other, and you will no longer hate. Besides, you allow it to be your most sacred duty to love God above all things; you ought, therefore, to desire that he should be glorified and obeyed. Would you dare to wish that any reasonable creature should deny homage to him, or rebel against his laws? This idea makes you shudder, and you will therefore desire that every man should serve God, and be in the right way. If you do this, you wish to every man perfection and the highest felicity; you love every man as yourself.

Is it beautiful to give up our life for the sake of truth and justice, to do it without having witnesses to admire us, without complaining, with the certainty that deluded men will follow us with execrations, and that the feeling of the righteousness of our cause will not find a place out of our own bosom, whereon it may lean or diffuse itself? There is no one who would not weep with admiration, at hearing that a man had quitted the world thus. But who will prove that it is reasonable to do this?



What is the motive to induce us to renounce that feeling which governs our whole being ; that desire that other immortal souls like our own should sympathize with our deepest and holiest feelings ? Because, when there is no other way for us to fulfil justice than by suffering death, we are sure that God has marked out that way for us to come to him ; because the present life has not its fulfilment within itself ; because the desire we feel to be approved will not be satisfied till we see that God approves of us ; because every sacrifice that we can make is light in comparison with the ineffable sacrifice of the God-Man, whom we ought to resemble if we desire to partake of his kingdom.

These are the motives by which millions of weak creatures, assisted by that divine aid which renders all duties easy, have found that the most admirable and difficult resolution, that of dying amid torments for the sake of truth, was the most reasonable, and the only reasonable duty, and have therefore embraced it. Wonderful history of religion ! in which the act of virtue most superior to human strength, is perhaps that of which the examples are most common.

We cannot imagine one virtuous act for which the Gospel does not give motives : we cannot imagine a vicious sentiment which, according to the Gospel, does not suppose a false idea. If we ask a

Christian in any case what is the most reasonable and useful resolution, he will answer, that which is most honest and generous.

But this is not all: from the systems of moral philosophy there arises another essential defect, one indeed which is irremediable. When, however, we look at these systems in this point of view, and compare them with the morality of religion, we shall find the latter is not only exempt from this, but on the contrary possesses a peculiar perfection.

In the principle of morality, we do not seek merely a speculative truth, but we wish to find a series of rules for the conduct of our life. Now, all the principles of human morality are barren, and without application; not but that if a principle is given, they can deduce rules; but because these rules are not incontestable, universal, and perpetual, rules which all ought to acknowledge, when they have admitted the principle.

Let us briefly enter into the examination of one of these which is perhaps the most diffused in our times, that which reduces all moral obligation to mere self-interest, properly understood; a principle which supposes that private always coincide with public interests, so that a man, by assisting others, contributes to his own happiness, and *vice-versâ*. (Essai sur l'Indifférence en Matière de Religion, 3d edit. tom. i. note to p. 476-7.) Let us suppose a

man convinced of this principle, and sincerely disposed to regulate himself by it; let us suppose him selecting an action; what is he to do to find the rule?—he will examine his interests. What will he do thoroughly to understand it?—he will glance at all the chances of pleasure or pain that this action will cause him. Has he a knowledge of the future?—does he know the effect of effects, the circumstances independent of his action, which will operate upon him in consequence of it; the opinions and caprices of men, and the possible change even of his own sentiments? We do not speak of the time and trouble this research would require, but let us ask if it can lead to any result? This principle, then, is only applicable to the past; it is a principle of observation, and not of rules. You will say to me, In examining all the actions of men, we see that virtuous ones have increased the happiness of those who performed them; whilst vicious ones have carried their punishment along with them. Be it so; I allow this; but this is not the question: I ask, which of two actions, between which I must choose, will make me the happier? Do you refer me back to my experience?—this is not enough. To the experience of all ages?—but I am not acquainted with it; nor would even that be sufficient for me, because I want to know the effects of an action



upon myself, merely from the circumstances in which I am placed. Do you refer me to universal consent?—this does not exist; and even if it did exist, it would be no authority for me; for I must then suppose that men do not err when they agree in deciding an action to be good or evil, and that their unanimous observations are also applicable to my case.

But as, according to this system, in every virtuous action two conditions are realized, the good of the person who performs it, and the public benefit; so, as I cannot foresee the former, nor deduce from it the rule for the action, I will at least seek for it in the benefit conferred upon the public, with the certainty, that if I contribute to that, I shall have found my own private happiness. But it is useless to say more, to show that this too is impossible to arrive at; for to discover the extent of pleasure or pain which my determination will cause to others, is beyond the power of the human mind. Let us, however, suppose that a man arrived at it, that he knew an action was certainly useful to others, and made up his mind to perform it; let us suppose, that on account of this action (and the hypothesis is not strange) he was hated, persecuted, and tormented; does his action become bad, because he did not know how to combine his own interest with that of others? A good conscience, you answer, sustains and rewards him, and

thus puts his own interest in security. But I ask, is the voice of conscience sure and perpetual? does it, in consequence of all actions useful to the public, infuse a pleasure infallibly superior to all the evils that may result from them to their authors, and a sorrow for all hurtful actions, superior to any advantages springing from them? If this be affirmed, we must then recur to conscience alone to regulate ourselves, independently of every other pleasure or pain; because the pain and pleasure of the conscience being infallible, and always preponderant, will give us, according to this system, a certain criterion of virtue. If this be not affirmed, if it be said that the retribution of the conscience may fail, first with respect to time, since a man may have pleasure in an evil action and pain in an useful one, and die before the remorse or the approbation of his conscience brings him punishment or reward; if it be said that this retribution is uncertain, because it depends on the circumstances, ideas, and temperament of the man on whom it operates, it will be a necessary consequence, that the certain knowledge of an action being useful to the public is not sufficient to declare it virtuous, and to prove to any one that he ought to undertake it, since it cannot be proved that it will be useful to himself. For if it be said that this voice of conscience, although neither infallible nor prepon-



derant, is yet to be calculated on, as it is a known fact that it experiences pleasure and pain according to actions, and from that circumstance gives a probability of reward or punishment, a consequence would be derived from it, that, to equal external circumstances, the obligations are not equal; because the knowledge of the public injury may oblige a man to abstain from it, who, knowing himself to be of delicate conscience, foresees that a diminution of happiness will accrue to him from having caused it; but not the man who, feeling himself hardened against remorse, promises himself tranquillity of mind; and the two extremes of the system, public interest and private interest, will combine in the former case, but not in the latter. Such are the consequences of this system, besides many others noticed by moralists: an absurd system, because it is founded on the supposition that the public advantage always coincides with the private interests of the agent in this life; a supposition which is contradicted in a thousand instances by reality, and which, even if it were true, could not be demonstrated and put forth as a principle for the future, seeing that every man has not the necessary data to certify its truth in his own case. And as one error is the cause of another, this system is inapplicable in practice, for the same reasons which make it absurd in principle.

Let it be also noticed, that this system is nothing more than the adulteration of a great truth proposed by religion; namely, that by living righteously, we obtain supreme felicity. An arbitrary philosophy has desired (if I may use such an expression) to take from this calculation the cypher of the future life, and thus the calculation is found false.

It is therefore clear, that rules of conduct cannot be deduced from this principle when they are wanted; I repeat *certain* rules. Although a person may find such a rule in his own case, and may rest upon it, he cannot transform it into a precept, nor will it be such as to oblige all those who admit the principle, to recognise it under penalty of being unreasonable.

This failure is common to all the other systems of human morality, because in all of them the rules of conduct are not expressed in the principle, nor are they necessarily derived from it. To establish them in an incontestable manner, a prophetic knowledge of all the effects of actions is necessary, and an acquaintance with all their relations to the general order of things. Admitting that the idea of duty is the principle of moral obligations, we must, in order to have the rules, either say that man knows all his duties in every case, or confess that the rules ought to come to us from quite

another source ; admitting that to be conscience, we must either say that this never deceives us, and then refer the rules to each man's conscience, or confess also here that they do not spring from the principle.

Religious morality alone can give rules at once practical, incontestable, and indissolubly united to its principle, because it alone can acknowledge an infallible principle of authority, which is God, and can alone communicate to man the rules derived from and revealed by this principle. Whoever admits this, is obliged to receive the rules, and must needs be certain that they are just, because he who gave them knows all the possible relations of sentiments and actions with eternal and immutable justice.\*

A principle this is of unexceptionable authority ; a rule to which every act and every thought are submitted ; a spirit of perfection, that in every doubtful case urges the choice to the better part ; promises superior to every conceivable temporal interest ; a model of holiness, set forth in the God-

\* Here we see the absurdity of pretending to make exceptions to the divine law, under the pretext of greater utility ; which supposes a more extensive acquaintance with it in man than in God. Man only sees a portion of things ; God has come to assist his infirmity, and has given him rules, in following which he is sure to do that which he would have chosen, if he had seen every thing. The man who dispenses with them, puts the little he knows in opposition to the infinite wisdom of God, and decides in favour of his own opinion.



Man : efficacious means to assist us to imitate his example, provided in the Sacraments instituted by Him, in which if any one have the misfortune not to recognize the Divine authority, he cannot at least shut his eyes to the fact, that they are naturally adapted to lead men to every virtue : such a principle is the morality of the Catholic Church : a morality which alone has been able to make us know what we are ; which alone has given birth to hope, from the knowledge of evils which are, humanly speaking, irremediable ; a morality which all would wish to see practised by others, and which, being practised, would afford to all the highest degree of perfection and happiness that can be enjoyed on this earth ; a morality, to which the world itself has been unable to refuse a perpetual testimony of admiration and applause.

It is but too true, that since the promulgation of Christianity some philosophers have laboured to discover another system. *They have occupied themselves with seeking out a theory of duties : like those who, being with a thirsty multitude, and knowing a large stream to be at hand, stop to make, by chemical process, a few drops of water which do not satisfy.* When they have lighted upon some important moral truth, they have forgotten that it has been taught them, that it was a portion or a consequence of the catechism ;

they have not perceived that they only lengthened the way to arrive at it ; and that, instead of presenting a new law, they deprived of its authority a law already promulgated. \*

The Church was not ignorant of their attempts, or of the results of them ; but was this to be an example for her ? Was she to imitate them, when she was obliged to admonish and compassionate them ?

Was it not for the Church, to whom Jesus

\* The man who did not reflect that the moral sciences do not follow the progress of others, (because they are not dependent merely on the intellect, nor propose truths, which being once acknowledged, are no more contradicted, serving as a stepping-stone to other truths) would be at a loss to explain how the doctrine of Helvetius should have been able to succeed in France, that of the great moralists of the seventeenth century. Struck with the inferiority of the former, he would not know which of the two modes of accounting for this circumstance was the least strange to admit, whether that Helvetius, a moralist by profession, did not care to inform himself of the actual state of the science, and of the opinions of writers the most renowned and recent ; or that, on reading their works, he did not see how the questions he has brought forward were completely solved by them, and that the solution was what he must necessarily have found to be the most magnanimous and useful, that which he would have desired every one to adopt in relation to himself ; and that he had not perceived how, in their books, every thing harmonizes with the knowledge a man has of himself, how their principles are without any exception of time or persons, how their perfection is demonstrated, and how the true mode of treating moral questions in an useful, general, and honest point of view, was to adopt those principles, and apply them to the observations which society presents.



Christ had consigned a perfect system of morality, to retain it in her own possession? Was it for her to cease the language of Peter: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John vi. 69.) Was it for her to leave off repeating, "he who gathereth not with me, scattereth?" (Luke xi. 6.) Was she for a moment to suppose that there were two "*ways*," two "*truths*," two "*lives*?" Precepts have been entrusted to her, and should she, as a faithless depositary, or an unbelieving administratrix, dispense doubts? Was she to put aside the eternal word, and to entangle herself in human learning, to arrive forsooth at the conclusion that virtue is more reasonable than vice; that God ought to be worshipped and obeyed, and that we ought to love our brethren? Did the Eternal Word take upon him this mortal flesh, and undergo the unspeakable agonies of redemption, in order to merit for the society he founded a place among the schools of philosophy? Was it for her, who by her very first instructions could elevate the simple peasant, who was ignorant of every thing but of hope, to the highest pinnacle of morality; to that point at which Bossuet found himself, after having gone through a vast circle of sublime meditation; was it for her, instead of raising her follower above the maze of human reasonings, to cast him back upon a path that leads to

a hundred different conclusions? The wearied stranger has wandered from his way, and seeks for refuge in the city "that crowns the mountain top," (Matt. v. 14); was it for her to shut her gates against him? Hungering after righteousness, certainty, authority, and hope, he has recourse to the Church; and shall the Church not break to him that bread which multiplies in her hands? No: it is not thus the Church betrays her children; we cannot fear that we shall be forsaken by her: but there does remain to us the salutary fear that we may abandon her; nor should this fear do aught but increase our faith in Him, who alone can keep us steadfast to this "pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) Forget we now the eighteen centuries of her existence, of the succession of her pastors and sovereign pontiffs, of her continuation in the same doctrines, eighteen centuries during which are counted so many triumphs, so many persecutions, so many painful separations, and not one only transaction, that we have need of experience? The first Christians had it not, and yet they believed; the word of that God to whom "a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past," was sufficient for them.

I shall not enlarge further on the superiority of religious morality; an argument that has been discussed by the most eminent men, and that is na-

turally allied to all the works which speak of this morality. The detached pieces that Pascal has left, alone contain more important discoveries in general morality than many volumes.\* Besides, the sole object of the present work is to exhibit this superiority. Let us now briefly recapitulate the results of the comparison we have drawn in this chapter.

Philosophy has not been able to agree upon one sole principle and upon one sole rule, which are the two essential parts of morality. It has therefore no unity, and is consequently unfit to bear a comparison with revelation.

By examining the systems of moral philosophy in their turn, we shall find that none of them are

\* Pascal, because he was a profound observer of the evils in man, has been many times accused of gloom and moroseness; and yet perhaps this charge has never been brought against Helvetius, though he represents human nature in the saddest and most melancholy point of view. This difference in judgment is the more strange, inasmuch as Pascal, who had studied himself too deeply to be a despiser of others, breathes nothing but compassion for himself and others, resignation, love, and hope; from time to time with joy and calmness lifting up to heaven that eye of his which had been disturbed and confused by the contemplation of the abyss of the human heart; while the reflections of Helvetius are often bitter, angry, impatient, or rudely joyful. Pascal is morose, because he shews the necessity of remedies which displease us more than the evils. Helvetius, on the contrary, seeks for every moral blot an inadequate cause; instead of combating the passions, he flatters them, teaching men to attribute their vices to necessity, or the ignorance of others, and not to their own corruption.

able to reconcile the perfection of beauty with the perfection of reason ; hence they all must appear greatly deficient even in the estimation of their own partisans : whilst, on the other hand, theological morality unites these two conditions in the highest degree.

The systems of moral philosophy give no certain rules that are necessarily derived from their principle, while those proposed by moral theology possess these qualities ; its principle is the authority of God, and its rules are the commandments of God.

When it is admitted that the morality of the Gospel comes from God, it must be admitted that it is the strict duty of the Church to adopt and maintain it to the exclusion of every other system. When, moreover, we come to examine it in comparison with others, its perfections always prove its divine origin.

## CHAPTER IV.

ON THE DECREES OF THE CHURCH.—ON THE  
DECISIONS OF THE FATHERS, AND ON CASUISTS.

“ Elle (l'Eglise) substitua l'autorité de ses decrets,  
“ et les décisions des pères aux lumières de la raison  
“ et de la conscience, l'étude des casuistes à celle de  
“ la philosophie morale.” P. 413-14.

THE Church founds her authority on the words of Jesus Christ : she claims to be the depositary and interpreter of the scriptures and of tradition : she protests, not only that she has taught nothing but what is derived from Jesus Christ, but that she has opposed, and is ever ready to oppose every novelty that men have attempted to introduce ; that she is ready to cancel as soon as written every word that a profane hand would dare to add to the divine writings. She has never pretended to possess any authority to invent principles of essential morality ; but on the contrary, it is her glory not to possess such a power ; to be able to say that all truth has been taught her even from her very beginning ; that she has always had the necessary instructions and means in order to save her chil-



dren; and that she has an authority that cannot increase, because it has never been found to fail. She affirms in consequence, that her *decrees* are conformable to the Gospel, and that she only receives *the decisions of the fathers* as far as they also are conformable to it, and are a testimony of the continuance of the same faith and the same morality. If the Church speaks the truth, it cannot be said that she substitutes her decrees and decisions for the light of reason and conscience, as we cannot call that a substitute for the law, which explains its spirit, and determines its execution: it should rather be confessed that she regulates both by an infallible model, which is no other than the Gospel itself; and he who refuses to believe this assertion of the Church, must tell us what are those maxims of morality she proposes, that are not derived from the Gospel, that are opposed to it, or even indifferent to its spirit. This inquiry will only place in a clearer point of view the wonderful immutability of the Church in her ever-evangelical morality, and the infinite distance there is between her and all the philosophical sects, in which there is nothing but building up and pulling down, assertion and denial; in which those have been esteemed the wisest, who have confessed the most doubts.

As to the casuists, I shall begin by confessing I

have not read them, I do not say all, for that would be impossible, but not even one of them ; and I have no other idea of them, but what is derived from the confutation and censure directed against many of them. But a knowledge of their works is not necessary to establish the point which interests the Church with respect to them ; and that is, that the doctrines of the casuists cannot be attributed to the Church ; she is not responsible for private opinions, nor does she pretend that none of her sons can err : this pretension would contradict the prophecies of her divine Founder. She has never proposed the casuists as her rule of morality ; indeed, it would have been impossible to do so, their decisions being a collection of opinions frequently at variance with one another, and frequently contradicted.

The history of casuistry may give rise to two important observations : the one is, that the propositions, wicked even to extravagance, which have been put forth by some casuists, are founded on arbitrary systems, independent of religion. Some among them were formed in the schools of profane moral philosophers, and lost themselves in quoting Aristotle and Seneca, where Jesus Christ himself had spoken. The principle on which it seems these persons founded a great part of their authority (that of probability) is a principle altogether

philosophical: they have never, so far as I know, attempted to prove that it was derived from revelation, and they would have been much puzzled if they had. This is the spirit that Fleury observed in their writings: “Il s’est à la fin trouvé des casuistes qui ont fondé leur morale plutôt sur le raisonnement humain que sur l’Ecriture et la tradition, comme si Jésus-Christ ne nous avoit pas enseigné toute vérité aussi bien pour les mœurs que pour la foi; comme si nous en étions encore à chercher avec les anciens philosophes.”—(Mœurs des Chrétiens, 4e partie, 64 Multitude des Docteurs.) The other observation is, that the writers and the authority, which, in the Church, were raised against these propositions, constantly opposed to them the Scriptures and tradition. The excesses of a part of the casuists were caused then by a departure from the rule which the Church follows and proposes, and it is to these that we must recur, in order to bring back morality to its true principles.

## CHAPTER V.

ON THE HARMONY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN CATHOLIC  
MORALITY AND THAT WHICH RIGHT REASON  
TEACHES US TO BE JUST.

“ La morale fut absolument dénaturée entre les  
“ mains des casuistes ; elle devint étrangère au cœur  
“ comme à la raison : elle perdit de vue la souffrance  
“ que chacune de nos fautes pouvoit causer à quel-  
“ qu’une des créatures, pour n’avoir d’autres lois que  
“ les volontés supposées du Créateur : elle repoussa  
“ la base que lui avoit donnée la nature dans le cœur  
“ de tous les hommes pour s’en former une tout arbi-  
“ traire.” P. 414.

ALTHOUGH I am not here undertaking a defence  
of the casuists, yet I cannot but exclaim against  
a sweeping condemnation which includes them  
all. Their number is so great, that it is almost  
impossible but that there should have been some  
among them who have treated Christian morality  
with sincerity and ability ; and those who have  
unmasked and condemned the false maxims of  
some casuists, have not failed to make a distinc-  
tion among the multitude, and to render justice to  
the good.

As, however, the Church is accused, a little

above, of having substituted the study of the casuists for that of moral philosophy; and as the not admitting any other law than the will of the Creator (not *supposed*, but revealed), is not a private maxim of the casuists, but one solemnly inculcated by the Church, it is against her that these censures are in fact directed. Be that as it may; I think it right to place in its proper light the spirit of the Church in this particular, to show that what really proceeds from her is most wise, and to prevent any thing being attributed to her that is not her's. If the intention of our author has not been to censure the Church, so much the better; I shall have had an opportunity of rendering homage to her, without contradicting any body.

The Church did not form the groundwork of her morality, but found it in the word of God: "*I am the Lord thy God.*" (Exod. xx. 2.) This is the foundation and the sanction of the divine law, and consequently of the morality of the Church. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* (Ps. xc. 10. Eccl. i. 16. Prov. i. 7. Ibid. ix. 10.) Behold the groundwork on which alone the Church must needs build.

But in doing this, was it possible for her to put aside the natural basis of morality, that is to say, those sentiments of rectitude to which all men have a natural disposition? Certainly not, inasmuch as



these sentiments can never be in contradiction with the law of God, from which indeed they are derived. The law is only made to confirm them, to announce to man that he can and ought to follow them ; to give him the means of discerning between that which God has put into his heart, and that which sin has introduced there. For whilst these two voices are speaking within us, it is too often the case, that when a man opens his inward ears, he hears not any distinct and certain answer, but the confused sound of a melancholy contest. Hence, to make morality conformable to the divine law, is but to make it conformable to a pure heart and to sound reason ; and this is what the Church has done ; and she alone was able to do it, as the infallible interpreter of this law.

For of what use is it that the rule be perfect, if the hand of him who holds it trembles ? What would the holiness of the law avail, if the interpretation of it were left to the passionate judgment of those who ought to obey it, and if God had not rendered it independent of the fluctuations of the human mind, by entrusting it to that Church, which he has promised to assist ?

If, then, a feeling for the sufferings of another ; if the duty of not grieving one created to the image of God, be one of the sentiments impressed by God upon the heart of man, the Church will certainly

not have lost sight of it in her moral instructions, because she will not have lost sight of the divine law. Such is, in fact, the case.

Throughout the Universal Church, it is taught in her catechetical instructions, that the guilt of sin is aggravated in proportion to the injury we voluntarily inflict upon our neighbour by it.

The Church teaches that a number of actions are sins, to which no other culpability can be assigned, than the injury they cause to others.

The intention to afflict a man is always a sin; the most lawful act, or the exercise of the most undeniable right, becomes a fault if it be directed to this horrible object.

The Church, then, has had this sentiment in view, and has given her sanction to it, by teaching that the evil done to another becomes infallibly an evil to the man who does it; which is not, and cannot be taught by Nature.

The Church desires that her children should tutor their minds to triumph over pain, and not to lose themselves in weak and distrustful complainings: to this end, she presents them with a divine example of fortitude, and more than human calmness under sufferings. It is her wish that her children be severe towards themselves, but merciful and tender towards their brethren; and to make them so, she presents to them the same example,

the God-Man, who wept at the thought of the evils that would come upon the city in which he was about to suffer the most cruel death. (Lukexix. 41.) Ah! most assuredly the feeling of commiseration is not forgotten by that Church, which in the divine words of charity, preserves, ever united, and as it were mingled, the love of God and man: that Church, which carries her horror of bloodshed so far, as even to declare that if one of her ministers were to shed it for the defence of his country, he would contaminate his hands, and render them unworthy to offer up the Victim of Peace. So great is her desire that all men should see that her ministry is one of perfection, that if there be horrible circumstances in which it be lawful for man to combat man, she at least has not instituted ministers to do that which is lawful, but that which is holy; that, when it is thought certain evils can only be remedied by other evils, she at least will have no part therein: for her only end is to lead our desires to God, and she rejects all that is not holy, and considers sorrow as such, only when it is voluntary, only when it is an atonement, and when offered by the soul that suffers.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MORTAL AND VENIAL SIN.

“ La distinction des péchés mortels d’avec les péchés  
 “ véniels effaça celle que nous trouvions dans notre  
 “ conscience entre les offenses plus graves et plus par-  
 “ donnables. On y vit ranger les uns à côté des autres,  
 “ les crimes qui inspirent la plus profonde horreur  
 “ avec les fautes que notre foiblesse peut à peine  
 “ éviter.” P. 414.

For this observation, the declaration premised in the former chapter will suffice.

It seems our author admits with the Catholic Church the distinction between mortal and venial sins in their own nature, since he divides offences into those that are more grievous, and those that are more pardonable, referring for the distinction between them to conscience. We may therefore believe that his censure only falls on the application of the maxim, that is, on the designation of particular sins. In reference to which, I beg leave to observe that conscience, if deprived of the light of revelation, can never form an authority to which to recur in order to reform the judgment of the



Church, or any other judgment : it would be merely appealing from the conscience of one man to that of another.

When it is asserted, that the distinction between mortal and venial sins effaced that which was written in the conscience between heavier and more trivial offences, it sounds as if the Church, in teaching this distinction, had found one already existing in the minds of men anterior to this, exactly defined and universally received, and that for this she had substituted her own. But the fact is, on the contrary, that the voice of conscience (as we have often repeated) differs according to times, places, and individuals : to some it makes that appear a serious offence, which in the eyes of others is only a slight fault, or no fault at all, or perhaps a virtue ; whilst others held (and these by no means the least reflecting) that all faults were equal, and consequently did not find this distinction in their conscience, but even regarded it as a chimera. It was then to enlighten and regulate conscience that the Church was instituted ; and the natural conscience of man being neither always right, nor unanimous, nor infallible, it were absurd to argue that the Church should be amenable to such a tribunal.

What then ought to be the criterion by which

the Church should judge of the weight of offences? Assuredly the word of God.

The observation had long ago been made by one of those who had meditated and written the most on moral ideas, the great Saint Augustine, that "some things would be considered very trivial, if they were not declared in the Scriptures to be much more weighty than they appear to us;" and hence he deduced that "we ought to decide on the comparative guilt of sins according to the judgment of God, and not according to that of man."\* "Let us not therefore take," says he in another place, "false balances, to weigh that which we desire, and in the manner we desire; deciding according to our own fancy, that this is grievous, and this trivial; but let us take the divine balance out of the Scriptures, as from the treasury of the Lord, and in it weigh what is a grievous fault: nay, rather let us not weigh, but acknowledge what has been weighed by our Lord."†

\* *Sunt autem quadam quæ levissima putarentur nisi in Scripturis demonstrarentur opinione graviora. St. August. Enchiridion de Fide, &c. c. 79. Quæ sint autem levia, quæ gravia peccata non humano, sed divino sunt pensanda iudicio.* Ibid, c, 78.

† "Non afferamus stateras dolosas, ubi appendamus quod volumus, et quomodo volumus, pro arbitrio nostro dicentes, hoc grave, hoc læve est: se afferamus divinam stateram de Scripturis sanctis tamquam de thesauris dominicis, et in illa quod sit gravius appendamus; immo non appendamus sed a Domine appensa recognoscamus." *St. Aug. de Baptismo contra Donatistas, lib. ii. 9.*

In good truth, therefore, the appeal is from conscience to revelation ; that is, from the uncertain to the certain ; from the wandering and the tempted, to the incorruptible and the holy.

If, then, with a conscience reformed and enlightened by revelation, we observe what the Church teaches on the comparative guilt of offences, we shall only find new motives to admire the wisdom of the Church, and her fidelity to the divine word, of which she is the depositary and the interpreter. We shall discover that those things which she calls great sins, all proceed from a disposition of mind directly at variance with that sentiment of love and adoration which we owe to God, or with the love we owe to all men, who are our brethren both by creation and by redemption: we shall find that the Church has not numbered amongst the greater sins any sentiment that does not proceed from a proud and corrupt heart, and that is not incompatible with Christian justice ; any disposition that is not carnal or violent ; that does not tend to debase a man, to turn him aside from the glorious end of his existence, and to obliterate from his mind the divine traces of the image of his Creator ; and above all, any disposition, which does not involve, according to the express declaration of the Scriptures, exclusion from the kingdom of heaven. But in specifying these dis-



positions, the Church has very rarely pronounced the precise point at which such acts become grievous sins. She knows and teaches that God alone sees to what extent the heart of man departs from Him; and excepting when the outward action is an unequivocal expression of this disposition, she can only say, "Who can understand his sins?"\* (Ps. xviii. 12.)

Besides dispositions, there are actions, for the commission of which, eternal death is pronounced in the Scriptures: on the enormity of these there can be no dispute.

Besides these moreover, the Church has declared that certain acts of disobedience to the laws, which she has established through the authority given to her by Jesus Christ, are mortal sins. There is not, however, one of these decisions that need shrink from the examination of a serious, dispassionate, and christian mind; nor one that is not manifestly and directly conducive to the fulfilment of the divine law. Here it will not be foreign to our purpose to dwell for a few moments on one of them.

It is a mortal sin, not to hear Mass on a holiday of obligation.

I am well aware that the mere announcement of such a precept will excite laughter in many. But

\* "Delicta quis intelligit?" Ps. xviii. 12.



woe to us if we abandon all that has been the subject of derision. What serious idea or noble sentiment has ever been able to escape it? According to the judgment of many persons, that action only can be a sin which tends directly to the temporal injury of mankind; but the Church has not laid down her laws in conformity with an opinion so perfectly frivolous and thoughtless: the Church teaches other duties, and when she regulates her decisions agreeably to her doctrines, we must at least allow that she is consistent; if these decisions seem unreasonable, it must be proved that her whole doctrine is false; nor must she be judged with a spirit not her own, and which she reproves.

It is very well known that the Church does not so much place the fulfilment of the precept in the material attendance of the faithful at the sacrifice, as in the readiness of the will to assist at it: she declares the sick exempt from the obligation, as well as all those who are kept away by necessary occupations; while she holds those to be transgressors of it, who are indeed present in body, but whose hearts are far off by voluntary distractions: so true it is, that even in the most essential things she desires chiefly to have right the hearts of the faithful. This being premised, let us examine what dispositions are deemed a transgression of this precept.

The sanctification of the Lord's day is one of

those commandments, which the Lord himself has given to man. Unquestionably no divine command needs an apology; still we cannot but see the beauty and propriety of this, which specially consecrates one day to the noblest and most important of our duties; which recalls a man to his Creator.

The poor man, worn down by fatigue, bent to the earth, and uncertain whether it will yield him a miserable sustenance, forced to measure by his labour the day, which is not long enough for him: the rich man, anxious for the most part to spend it so as to get through it quickest; surrounded by those things in which the world affirms that happiness consists, and yet every moment filled with wonder at not finding himself happy; undeceived by the very objects from which he expected complete satisfaction, and longing after other objects, which, when attained, will in like manner undeceive him; the man overwhelmed by misfortune, and the man intoxicated by prosperity; the man wallowing in pleasures, and the man absorbed in the abstractions of science; the statesman; the private individual; in fact, all of us find, in every object that surrounds us, an obstacle in our approach to the Divinity, a power which tends to attach us to those things for which we were not created, and to make us forget our noble origin, and the important end for which we were sent into the world. Here,

then, appears manifest the divine wisdom of that precept which takes us off from mortal cares, to call us back to the contemplation of celestial things; which employs so many of even the unlearned man's days in a school of the sublimest philosophy; which sanctifies the repose of the body, rendering it the type of that repose of eternal enjoyment, for which we all pant, and which our soul feels itself capable of enjoying; of that precept which unites us in one temple, where our common prayers, reminding us of our common wants and miseries, make us feel that we are brethren. The Church, the constant guardian of this precept, dictates to her children the mode of following it in the most perfect and consistent manner. And among the means she selects, was it possible for her to forget that rite, of all others the most necessary; constituting the very essence of Christian worship, for it is no other than the sacrifice of Jesus Christ himself; that sacrifice, on which rests all faith, all knowledge, all rule, all hope? Can the Christian, who voluntarily abstains from such a sacrifice on such a day, be the "just man who lives by faith?" (Rom. i. 17, &c.) Is it possible for him to display in a more barefaced manner how little he cares for the divine precept of sanctification? Is it not evident that he has an aversion to Christianity in his heart, and that he has renounced the great-

est, the most sacred, and the most consoling object that faith presents ; that he has renounced Jesus Christ ? To pretend that the Church should not denounce the man who cherished such dispositions as a transgressor, were to desire her to forget that end for which she was instituted, and to allow us to fall back into the deadly air of heathenism.



## CHAPTER VII.

## ON RELIGIOUS ANIMOSITY.

“ Les casuistes présentèrent à l'exécration des hommes, au premier rang entre les plus coupables, les hérétiques, les schismatiques, les blasphémateurs. Quelquefois ils réussirent à allumer contre eux la haine la plus violente.” P. 414.

THERE are few things that corrupt a people so much as a habit of hatred : would that this sentiment were not perpetually kept alive by almost every thing that influences the mind and the spirit. Interest, opinion, prejudice, even truth itself, become to men an occasion of hating each other ; hardly an individual can be found who does not cherish in his heart hatred or contempt for whole classes of his brethren : hardly a misfortune can happen to a man, that is not a source of joy to many ; often not so much that it is any advantage to them, as, which is a far baser motive, that it gratifies a feeling of hatred. I confess, it surprises me not a little, to find the casuists classed amongst the corrupters of a nation in this respect ; the more so, as hitherto the only censure directed against

them was, that they were for justifying every act and every body, teaching men not to hate even vice itself.

But whosoever he be, whether casuist or not, that would teach a man to hate his brother, that man causes him to become, in the sight of God, *guilty of murder* ;\* he directly opposes the "*second commandment*," which is "*like unto the first* ;" of which our Lord has said, "*there is no other greater commandment*."† He places himself in direct opposition to the perpetual teaching of the Church, which has never ceased to proclaim, that "*the very sign of life is in the love of the brethren*."‡

Here let me observe, that among the causes that could have produced the supposed change in the character of the Italians, this one of religious hatred, admitting it to exist at all, is what has had the least share in doing so ; since there is perhaps no Christian nation in which the feeling of antipathy under pretext of religion has had less occasion to be called forth, or to influence the conduct of men.

\* "*Omnis qui odit fratrem suum homicida est.*" 1 John iii. 15.—Every man who hateth his brother is a murderer.

† "*And the second is like unto it : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*" Mark xii. 31.

‡ "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*" 1 John iii. 14.

Investigating this department of history, we have rather to lament over France and Germany in reference to this. Ah ! yes, amid the horrid feuds that have divided the Italians, this at least has never been known to have excited them : nor have the passions that gave birth to their enmities dared to screen themselves behind the veil of the sanctuary.

Too often do we find in our annals, feuds transmitted from one generation to another, on account of some wretched interests, and revenge preferred to private security : we find, at every step, two parties in the same nation furiously contending for superiority and dominion, which by a striking example have fallen to the lot of neither. We find a fierce obstinacy struggling to retain those as dangerous slaves, who might have been ardent and faithful friends : we find a frightful series of days of calamity, but none at least equal to those of Capel, where Zuinglius was slain (31st Oct. 1531), of Jarnac (16th Mar. 1569), or of Prague (8th Nov. 1620). True it is, there will one day rise up against this unhappy land, much blood calling for vengeance ; of that, however, shed on the score of religion, but little. Little, I say, in comparison with that which has defiled other parts of Europe. The furious animosities and misfortunes of other nations give to us the melancholy advantage of calling that quantity of blood small ; but the blood of one man

shed by the hand of his brother, is too much for all ages, and for the whole earth.

We cannot but reflect here on the injustice committed by so many writers, in attributing these horrid feelings, of religious hatred and their effects to Catholics alone ; an injustice which is evident to any one who merely skims over the history of these dissensions. Still, however, this partiality may be useful to the Church ; the cry of horror raised by all ages against them being principally directed against Catholics, they ought always to have it in their ears, and they will thus be led to mildness and mercy ; not only by the voice of the Church, but also by that of the world.

I know it has been said by many, that these enmities and massacres, although detested by the Church, may yet be imputed to her ; because, as she teaches her children to hate error, she disposes their minds to extend that feeling to the men who profess it.

To this it may be answered, that not only every religion, but every system of philosophy, teaches us to detest errors against the essential duties of men ; and there is no Christian sect which does not hold in detestation every error against the fundamental points of Christianity. But in order to justify the Church, there is no necessity of recurring to examples : suffice it to examine her maxims. It is a standing doctrine of the Church, that we ought



to hate error, but to love him who errs. Is there any contradiction between these two precepts? No one will affirm that there is. Still it is difficult to draw the line between sin and the sinner; it is hard to hate the former, and yet to cherish for the latter a love, not merely apparent, but real and active.\*

It is difficult! But what just thing is easy to corrupt man? Whence then arises the difficulty of reconciling two precepts, if they be both just? Is it right to hate error? Certainly it is, and there is no necessity to prove it. Is it right to love him who errs? Assuredly it is, for the same reason that it is right to love all men; because God, from whom we receive all things and hope all things, God, to whom we ought to direct all our actions, has so loved them, as to give for them his only begotten Son (John, iii. 16); because it is a horrible thing not to love those whom God has predestinated to his glory; and would it not be a proof of the most wicked and foolish temerity to affirm of any one living man in particular, that he is not of that blessed number, and that he is thus excluded from all hope in the infinite mercy of God? The witnesses who stood ready to cast the first stone at Stephen, laid their clothes at a young

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” 1 John iii. 18.

man's feet: he turned not away struck with horror, but, consenting to the death of that just man, staid to take care of them. (Acts vii. 57-9; viii. 1)—

If a Christian had then cherished in his heart a feeling of hatred for that young man, whose early perversion might appear a manifest sign of his being of the number of the reprobate, if that Christian had then murmured the curse, that seems so just in the mouth of the oppressed; alas! that Christian would have cursed the great Vessel of Election!\*

Whence then does the difficulty arise in reconciling these two commandments, if not from our corruption, which is the cause of every strife that arises between duties? To overcome this difficulty is the triumph of Catholic morality; for this alone can conquer it; this alone, by prescribing with the fulness of its authority all just things, leaves no doubt as to any duty, destroying that series of inductions by which men arrive at sacrificing one principle to another. This sanctifies them all, and places them beyond dispute. No good Catholic can ever think he has a right to hate his brother: the divine Law-giver, of whom he boasts to be a follower, knew that there would be unjust men, provokers of evil, men who are enemies of the faith, and yet he had nothing more to command

\* "Vas electionis est mihi iste."—Acts ix. 15.

him in reference to them than this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It is one of the brightest characteristics of Catholic morality, one of the grandest results of its authority, that it has anticipated every sophism of the passions by a precept and by an express declaration. So when it was disputed whether men of a different colour from Europeans should be considered as men or not, the Church, by pouring on their heads the water of regeneration, put to silence, as far as in her lay, these shameful discussions, and declared them to be brethren in Christ Jesus ; men called to partake of his inheritance.

More than this, Catholic morality even removes those causes, that opposed an obstacle to the fulfilment of these two great duties, the hatred of error and the love of men, for she forbids all pride, attachment to earthly things, and all that tends to destroy charity. She also furnished us with the means of fulfilling both; and these means are all those things that lead the mind to the knowledge of justice, and the heart to the love of it; meditation on our duties, prayer, the sacraments, distrust in ourselves, and confidence in God. The man who is sincerely educated in this school, elevates his benevolence to a sphere far beyond all opposition, interests, or objections ; and this perfection, even in



this life, receives a great reward. To all his moral victories there succeeds a consoling calm; and to love in God all those whom we would hate according to the reason of the world, becomes, to a soul that was born to love, a sentiment of ineffable delight.

Notwithstanding this, a writer, certainly of no mean order, has been found with the hardihood to avow, that the attempt to reconcile opposition against error with peace towards men, was not only difficult, but impracticable.

“La distinction entre la tolérance civile et la tolérance théologique est puérile et vaine; ces deux tolérances sont inséparables, et l'on ne peut admettre l'une sans l'autre. Les anges même ne vivroient pas en paix avec les hommes qu'ils regardoient comme les ennemis de Dieu.”—Rousseau *Emile*, liv. iv. note 40.

What consequences follow from this principle! The primitive Christians then ought not to have believed, that to depart from God and to worship idols rendered a man the enemy of his Creator. They were wrong then in contending with paganism; because it were imprudent and foolish to preach against a religion that does not render those who profess it the enemies of God! and when St. Paul reminded the faithful of the mercy which God had



shewn them when they were still his enemies, \* thus endeavouring to increase their gratitude and faith, he proposed to them a false and antisocial idea !

But why should it be impossible for men to live in peace with those who are the enemies of God, believing, as they do, that God commands them so to do, and reflecting, that they know not whether they themselves are worthy of love or hatred,† but certain that they will become the enemies of God by breaking his peace? Why should it be impossible, when they reflect that they will one day be asked, whether their faith was given them that they might dispense with charity; and that they will have no right to expect mercy, if they have denied it to others. Why, in fine, should it be impossible, when they are forced to confess that faith is a gift; one too, for the use of which they themselves ought to tremble?

These and similar reasons might have been adduced to the man who had started such an objection on the first appearance of Christianity; but that in these days such an objection should be made by a man like Rousseau seems almost in-

\* "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10.

† "No man knoweth whether he be worthy of love or of hatred." Eccles. ix. 1.

conceivable, impugning, as it does, the possibility of a fact of which the whole history of Christianity is one long and uninterrupted testimony.

He who gave the first example of this was certainly higher than the angels, but was at the same time a man; and in his designs of mercy he desired that his conduct should become a model for every one of his followers to imitate: the Redeemer prayed for his murderers as he was expiring. That generation still continued, when Stephen entered the first on that career of blood, which the God-man had opened. Stephen with divine wisdom, seeking to illuminate his judges and the people, and to call them to saving repentance, oppressed with blows and ready to seal his testimony with his blood, yielding his spirit to the Lord, makes no other prayer in reference to those who slew him, than, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge. And having so said, he fell asleep." (Acts vii. 59.)

Such was the conduct of the Christians throughout those ages in which men persisted in the unaccountable perversity of worshipping the idols they had made with their own hands, and killing the just, and such has ever been the conduct of all true Christians: the horrid repose of paganism they never disturbed, no not even by their groans. What more can be done to preserve peace with men than to love them and to die? That this doctrine was consistent

with itself and very clear to Christian understandings, we shall be forced to admit, when even children found it intelligible; for, faithful to the instructions of their mothers, they even smiled at their executioners; those who sprung up imitated those who fell before them; first-fruits of the saints; flowers that blossomed beneath the sickle of the reaper.

But does the history of Christianity furnish no instances of hatred and of war? Too many, alas! But then what we have to seek in a doctrine is the legitimate consequences to be derived from it, not those which the passions may deduce. This principle, true at all times, may be repeated in the present age with additional confidence that it will be listened to, now that many of those, who would deny it in the case of religion, find themselves constrained to invoke it for other doctrines. The memorable historical epoch in which we live is distinguished for the discovery, the diffusion, and the remodelling of certain political principles, and the disposition that has been shown to reduce them to practice: the promulgation of these principles has been the occasion of evils of the greatest magnitude; the enemies of the principles assert that the evils are to be imputed to them, and that they ought consequently to be abandoned. The supporters of them on the other hand maintain that it is absurd and unjust to prescribe truths on account of the abuse that men have

made of them; that we shall not succeed in removing the passions from the world by ceasing to promulgate and establish these truths; that by keeping men in error a much more certain and direct cause of calamity and injustice is left alive; that men are far from becoming better or more amiable by having false ideas. “*La Saint Barthélemy n’a pas fait proscrire le catholicisme,*” said a celebrated writer, taking up this train of reasoning, (*Considérations sur la Révolution Française, par Mad. de Staël, tom. iii. p. 382*); and in truth no consequence would have been more foolish and more unjust. The recollection of that atrocious night should serve to banish ambition and the spirit of faction; the abuse of power, insubordination to the laws; that dreadful and foolish policy which teaches the violation of justice at every step to obtain some fancied advantage; and that when these accumulated violations have created some imminent danger, it then becomes lawful to try every expedient to save our all: such recollections should serve to banish treachery and fraud, provocation and rancour, the lust of power which makes men plot and dare every thing, and the undue love of life, which sets aside all law to preserve it; for those and similar passions were the true causes of the massacre for which that night is infamous.

Let us then again repeat the great principle, that



in a doctrine we should look for its legitimate consequences, not those that may be deduced from it by the passions; and by applying it to religion we shall find, how far in this also it is above all human theories, on account of the inimitable characteristics that distinguish it. It excludes every hurtful consequence, and it excludes it by that same authority which renders sacred its own principles; this was a triumph to be achieved by itself alone: if, therefore, by proceeding from one chain of reasoning to another, a man arrives at a conclusion that would constitute an injustice, he may be sure that he has reasoned wrong, and if he is sincere, he finds in religion herself a warning that he has gone astray: because wherever evil appears, there she provides a prohibition and a threat. It is not then reasonable to cast the blame upon Revelation, because men hate and destroy each other; but it should be stated on the contrary, that there is such a natural disposition in mankind to hate and to injure one another, that a pretext has been found for it even in the truths of a religion which commands them to love one another, as a rule without exception: what would they not have done had they derived their pretext from principles or interests to which this commandment was not essentially allied, from things in which the passions govern entirely, and in fact what have they not done?

The Catholic religion has never been, nor can it

ever be, the direct and natural cause of dissension ; but in the hand of a man in a rage every thing is a weapon : this does not break forth while men are peaceable and quiet, but always in ferocious and brutal times, when all the hostile passions are inflamed ; and I think I may add without being contradicted by history, in times distinguished by great indifference to the essentials of religion,\* and by a peculiar eagerness for all those things which a sincere love to religion considers vanity.

Every time we find in history an example of the benign influence of religion, we cannot but acknowledge a cause that produces its own effect. What an example of this was the "*truce of God* !" It was the voice of concord and piety, making itself heard above the cries of provocation and revenge ; it was the voice of the Gospel, and it issued from the

\* It is well known that the constable Montmorenci was mortally wounded at St. Denis while fighting on the Catholic side. Davila thus relates his end, "He died without perturbation of mind and with the greatest constancy ; so that when a priest approached the bed on which he lay to administer consolation to him, he turned to him with a serene countenance, and begged he would not disturb him, for it would have been a sad thing to have known how to live for eighty years, and not to know how to die for a quarter of an hour." (*Istoria delle Guerre civili di Francia*, lib. 4.

What a catholic is here ! He trusts in himself ; at the end of a long life only looks on it with satisfaction ; never thinks of invoking the mercy of God, and refuses the ministry instituted to dispense it.

mouths of Bishops and Priests. But in order to account for the vexations committed under pretext of religion, we must necessarily suppose a state of ignorance or bad faith, irritation of mind, pre-existing motives for hatred, objects which are concealed, and a degree of passion that so far clouds the understanding, as to make it consent to what is forbidden by that very law which it regards as its guide. Saint Ambrose broke in pieces and sold the sacred vessels to ransom the Illyrian slaves, most of whom were Arians; St. Martin of Tours went to Treves, to intercede with the emperor in behalf of the Priscillianists, and considered as excommunicated Ithacius and the other bishops who had stirred him up to treat them with severity; St. Augustine supplicated the proconsul of Africa for mercy towards the Donatists, who we all know gave the Church so much trouble. ‘We pray you,’ said he, ‘that those may not be slain, for whom we pray God that they may repent.’\*

These were true Catholics, and ecclesiastical history abounds with such examples. And amongst the many which even modern times have produced, there is one which I cannot pass by, being as it is one of

\* Non tibi vile sit neque contemptibile fili honorabiliter dilectissime quod vos rogamus ne occidantur, pro quibus rogamus Dominum ut corrigantur. August. Donato, procons. Afr. Epist. c. t. ii. p. 270, edit. Maur.



the most splendid perhaps, and yet during the course of the last half century it has been too often attempted not only to deprive the Church of the glory of it, but even to place it in the most ignominious light. I allude to the conduct of the Catholic clergy in America. The minds of the Spaniards were completely brutalized by rage at the obstacles they had met with; by their avarice, which became rapacious in proportion to the expectations of a heated imagination; by fear, to which even the most determined minds are subject, rendering them cruel when not supported by a conviction of duty, and in a word by all the passions of conquest; while on the other hand the Americans had, as we may say, none to plead their cause but the ecclesiastics; and these had no other arguments to adduce in their favour, but those furnished by the Gospel and the Church. Let me here quote the well-known passage of Robertson, replete as it is with importance, no less from the impartiality of the historian, than the accuracy and extent of research that led him to form his opinion. "With still greater injustice," says he, "have many authors represented the intolerant spirit of the Roman Catholic religion as the cause which led to the extermination of the Americans, accusing the Spanish ecclesiastics of animating their countrymen to the slaughter of that innocent people, as idolaters and enemies of God. But the first missionaries who



visited America, though weak and illiterate, were pious men. They early espoused the defence of the natives, and vindicated their character from the aspersions of their conquerors, who, describing them as incapable of being formed to the offices of civil life, or of comprehending the doctrines of religion, contended that they were a subordinate race of men on whom the hand of nature had set the mark of servitude. From the accounts which I have given of the humane and persevering zeal of the Spanish missionaries in protecting the helpless flock committed to their charge, they appear in a light which reflects lustre on their functions. They were ministers of peace, who endeavoured to wrest the rod from the hands of oppressors. To their powerful interposition the Americans were indebted for every regulation tending to mitigate the rigour of their fate. The clergy in the Spanish settlements, regular as well as secular, are still considered by the Indians as their natural guardians, to whom they have recourse under the hardships and exactions to which they are too often exposed." (*Hist. of America*, Book 8, part 5.)

What a religion is this, in which weak men, armed only with piety, resist the strong in favour of their brethren ! in which ignorant men detect and unravel the sophisms, that passion would oppose to justice ! In an expedition where nothing was thought of but

conquest and gold, these men only speak of duty and mercy; they cited the conquerors to the tribunal of God, and declared oppression to be wicked and irreligious. The world, with all its passions, sent against the Indians enemies whom they had never offended; religion sent them friends whom they had never known. These friends were hated and persecuted, sometimes even obliged to conceal themselves; nevertheless they ameliorated the condition of the conquered, and by their constancy and sufferings, bore testimony to religion that it was not assuredly a pretext for cruelty; that these crimes were perpetrated in spite of its protests. The merciless destroyers were well content to pass for men of zeal; but the ministers of religion would not permit them to assume that disguise, and they have been forced to find their excuse in every principle but that of religion; they have been compelled to take refuge in pretexts of convenience, of political utility, and of the impossibility of following the divine law exactly; they have been obliged to assert the great evils that would have ensued if men had been just; that it was necessary to oppress men cruelly, for otherwise it would have been impossible to oppress them at all.\*

\* Only one ecclesiastic disgraced his office by exciting his companions to shed blood, and this was the notorious Valverde. But in examining his conduct, as described by Robertson, it is evident

If to represent a persecuting intolerance as a consequence of the spirit of Christianity be a calumny refuted by the doctrines of the Church, it is still more unjust to represent it as a vice peculiar to

in my opinion that it did not arise from religious fanaticism. Pizarro had formed the perfidious design of seizing the Inca Atahualpa, in order to reign in Peru and glut himself with gold. Having decoyed the Inca to an interview under the mask of friendship, he sent Valverde to meet him, who made a long harangue in which the mysteries and the history of the holy and pure religion of Christ were spoken of only to come to the absurd conclusion, that the Inca ought to submit to the king of Castile as his lawful sovereign. The answer and indignation of Atahualpa were Valverde's pretext for calling his countrymen to arms against the Peruvians. "As for Pizarro," to use the words of Robertson, "during this long conference he had with difficulty restrained his soldiers, eager to seize the rich spoils of which they had now so near a view, and he immediately gave the signal of assault." Pizarro himself, as he intended, made the Inca prisoner, who after undergoing a most absurd mockery of a trial was condemned to die, while "Valverde prostituted the authority of his sacred function to confirm the sentence, and by his signature warranted it to be just." (Ibid. Book 6.) Now is it not evident, that any pretext was sufficient for men who had made up their minds to be unjust, for men who had force to achieve their designs and a rich booty to excite their desire; that Valverde was the horrid instrument, but not the originator of the injustice; that his conduct shows rather a base connivance with the ambition and avarice of Pizarro, than any thing like religious fanaticism? Marmontel, it is true, in his 'Incas,' wished to attribute to this passion the greater part of the cruelties of the Spaniards, but he could only do so by misrepresenting the history entirely. He pretends that Pizarro was far from having any intention to deceive or oppress the Inca; he passes over Atahualpa's cruelty, and denies (I know not on what authority) the orders given by him to put his rival brother Huascar to death, and then loads the character of Valverde with other atrocities of



Christians. Was it the truths of Christianity that rendered the Pagan emperors cruel? Was it the profession of them that produced that unopposed

his own invention, as if he were not already bad enough, and wishing to make him odious, renders his story improbable by ascribing to him vices which are incompatible with one another. Thus when History fails to prove certain general maxims enough, Romances are written, which prove them too much. Common sense alone is sufficient to show that it is not in the nature of man, however fanatical he may be, to conceive a violent hatred against men who do not profess Christianity, merely because they are ignorant of it. Besides, if the disposition of the Spanish ecclesiastics were such as to make them receive impulses of this sort from religion, how came it, that all the others spoke and acted not only differently, but exactly the reverse? If the conduct of Valverde were conformable to the mode in which his fellow citizens understood religion, how was it that (as Robertson assures us) it was condemned by all their historians?

It is but just to observe that the work of Marmontel, whatever be its value in an historical point of view, is calculated to leave an impression of horror against violence and blood; an impression that ought never to be weakened, whatever be the means by which it has been produced. In this case it acquired new strength from the conduct of Marmontel, who always acted consistently with his own sentiments. But it is also proper to account for political and moral evils by their right causes, instead of falsely ascribing them to arbitrary ones, in order to prevent as much as possible that most false and dangerous impression, that Religion is at variance with Humanity. Not to say, that the religion outraged by Valverde has been ably vindicated, not only by nearly all the ecclesiastics who accompanied the different expeditions, but also by the thousands of missionaries who, carrying the true faith to savages and unbelievers of every description, went forth as 'lambs among wolves.' (Luke x. 3.) The history of these wonderful enterprizes of love is too vast and extended to be treated of in a note; suffice what has already been said.



and remorseless cruelty, which shed the blood of so many millions of, I will not say innocent persons, but persons who carried virtue to the highest point of perfection; and that directed the anger of the world against those "of whom the world was not worthy." (Heb. xi. 38.)

At the beginning of the second century an aged man was brought before the emperor at Antioch, who, after asking him some questions, demanded at length if he persisted in declaring that he carried Jesus Christ in his heart. The aged man having answered in the affirmative, the emperor commanded him to be bound and taken to Rome, to be thrown alive to wild beasts. He was loaded with irons, and after a long journey arrived at Rome, when he was immediately led to the amphitheatre and torn to pieces by wild beasts for the amusement of the Roman people. (Tillemont, S. Ignace.) The old man was no other than Saint Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, disciple of the Apostles; his life had rendered an honourable testimony to such a school. The same courage he had displayed when listening to his sentence, accompanied him throughout his journey; ever calm like one of those resolute feelings arising from the most mature deliberation, in which every obstacle has been foreseen and weighed; it made him listen to the roaring of the wild beasts with joy: that death so ignominious, that death so

certain, whose presence strikes terror even into hearts the most prepared to meet it, had nothing to terrify him: so strongly had the Holy Spirit fortified his heart, so strongly did he love! The emperor was Trajan.

No sooner is it asserted of a Christian, that by an unjust and erroneous zeal he has usurped a right over the lives of others, however pious he may have been in every other respect, however irreprehensible, and even active in doing good, still the blood he has shed is deemed more than a counterpoise for all his virtues: a whole life of merit is not enough to make amends for one single act of violence. Why then, in the favourable estimate given of Trajan's character, is not the blood of Ignatius and of so many other innocent persons brought up against him? Why is he held forth as an example, and why are his times still praised, as they were by Tacitus, when he says, that it was then lawful to feel what you pleased, and to say what you felt? \* Why? but because we follow for the most part the opinions of others, and the Pagans, who formed theirs of Trajan, did not think that the spilling of Christian blood detracted any thing from the humanity and justice of a prince. It is Religion that has made it difficult for us to allow him the title of just and humane; that Religion, which has revealed to us, that in the

\* "*Rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quæ velis, et quæ sentias dicere licet.*"—Histr. lib. i.

sufferings of an immortal soul there is something ineffable; which has taught us to regard and respect in every man the image of God and the price of redemption. When mention is made of men condemned to the flames under pretext of religion, were any one to allege, by way of extenuating the atrocity of the sentence, that the judges were fanatics, the world has its reply ready—they had no right to be so; should it be urged that they were deceived the world answers, that no man ought to be deceived who pretends to dispose of the life of another; if it be alleged that at least they thought they rendered homage to religion, the world rejoins that such an opinion is blasphemy. Alas! who was it then, I pray, taught the world that God is only honoured by mildness and love, by giving our own lives up for those of others, far from taking life away, and that the free-will of man is the only faculty from which God deigns to receive homage at all?

To account for the savage persecutions against the Christians, we are almost forced to imagine that regard for human life was unknown to the Pagans; that it was a sentiment altogether new and revealed by the Gospel: for on reviewing their history we behold incredible atrocities committed without any strong impulse; princes, we see, without fanaticism, seconding the desire of the people for punishments,



not from any political motive, not through fear or anger, but I might almost say through indifference; for the cruel death of thousands of persons could not be an object of much consideration to men, who could put to death a thousand slaves at one feast; and to assert this of them is truly to do them no wrong.

Pliny's famous letter to Trajan, and the answer of the latter, are proofs of this spirit of Paganism. Pliny, who had been appointed proconsul of Bythynia, consults the emperor on the case of the Christians; explains his former conduct, speaks of an anonymous information by which he has discovered others, and requests instructions. The emperor approves of Pliny's conduct, forbids him to seek out the Christians, but commands him to punish them when denounced; pardoning those who deny they are so, and substantiate their denial by sacrificing to the Gods. In fine, he orders him to take no account of anonymous accusations for any crime, "since," says he, "*it would be setting a bad example, and one unworthy the age we live in.*"\*

\* "Actum quem debuisti, mi secunde, in excutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant secutus es....—Conquirendi non sunt, si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt; ita tamen, ut qui negaverit se Christianum esse, idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est supplicando diis nostris, quamvis suspectus in præteritum fuerit, veniam ex pœnitentia impetret. Sine auctore vero propositi libelli nullo crimine locum habere debent: nam et pessimi exempli, nec nostri sæculi est."—Trajanus Plinio, in Plin. Epist. 98.



But in point of barbarity, what could be unworthy of an age, in which the laws had not decided on the necessity of an accuser making himself known; in which a prince commands, not deeds, but opinions, to be punished; and though, indeed, he forbids the men to be searched for, yet he orders a magistrate to use the power of the law against them, and begins, notwithstanding, by declaring that he cannot, in this case, give a certain and universal rule;\* of an age in which a magistrate, eminent for the cultivation of his mind and the mildness of his character, asks for instructions, whether a man were to be punished for the mere name of Christian, when no other crime had been laid to his charge; or, whether he was to be punished for crimes that were inseparably connected with this name; whether he was to make any distinction in point of age, or treat children, however young, like adults? Of an age, in which such a man relates, that he had caused those who persisted in confessing themselves Christians to be led to punishment, "*not doubting*," says he, *that whatever it was they confessed, their inflexible obstinacy ought, at all events, to be punished?*" Of an age, in which this man, having ascertained from his enquiries that the Christians met, not to plot

\* Neque enim in universum aliquid quod certam formam habeat constitui potest.—Ib.

mischief, but to animate each other to the exercise of every virtue, could feel no remorse on account of those ‘*obstinate*’ persons he had put to death, but was even capable of torturing two women in order to gain further information? He expresses great concern at the multitude of the Christians; but consoles himself with the hope that he may stop the evil in its course, rejoicing that sacrifices are again offered in the temples, and that the number of those who bought the flesh offered to idols is increased.\*

In these hopes and fears it is impossible to discern a single idea of morality, or of any thing of the kind. The blood of a fellow creature, the pangs of a violent death, the feelings of a man’s family when he is dragged from it to suffer punishment, are thrown into the scale along with—we

\* Nec mediocriter hæsitari, sit ne aliquod discrimen ætatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differant .... nomen ipsum, etiam si flagitiis careat, aut flagitia cohærentia nomini puniantur—perseverantes duci jussi: neque enim dubitabam, qualicumque esset quod faterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri—adfermabant .... se sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent. Quò magis necessarium credidi, ex duabis ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur, quid esset veri et per tormenta quærere. Visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium numerum. Certè satis constat jam desolata templa cœpisse celebrari, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti: passimque venire victimas, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. Plin. Trajan. Epis. 97.

know not what. Assuredly can it not be urged that it was fidelity to an ancient law of the empire that furnished the motive for those persecutions, seeing they were begun and discontinued according to the disposition or caprice of the different emperors, prefects, and pro-consuls, and when the law itself was so confused that Pliny did not know how to apply it. Besides, were not these laws the work of man? How comes it, then, that the Roman emperors, who were able to abolish or violate the most fundamental laws and those which they had themselves established, so respectfully yielded their deference to such an one as this? What, in fine, was unworthy of an age, in which a venerable bishop, devoured by wild beasts, was a pastime for the people, and in which a prince, celebrated for his benignity, could afford his people such a pastime?

True it is, Christian annals transmit but too many instances of cruelty committed under the pretext of religion; but this we may safely assert, that they who perpetrated *them* were unfaithful to the laws they professed, and were condemned by them. In the persecutions of the Pagans, nothing can be attributed to the inconsistency of the persecutors, or to their disregard of their religion, for their religion had done nothing to deter them.

It may appear, perhaps, that I have lost sight of



the argument in this digression: but it will not have been without its use, if it has afforded us an opportunity of observing how too many writers, in their estimate of Christians and heathens, are far from deciding by an impartial judgment; if it has contributed to remove still further from Catholic morality the horrible stain of blood, which has been so often affixed to it, reminding us, that whatever violence has been used in the defence of this religion of peace and mercy, it was altogether opposed to its spirit, uninterruptedly professed in all ages by the true worshippers of Him, who so severely rebuked his disciples when they wished to call down fire from heaven on the cities which refused to receive him;\* of Him who commanded his Apostles to “*shake off the dust from their feet*,”† as they departed from them, “*and to abandon the obstinate*.” Let then those true Christians be in everlasting honour who in all times, and in spite of passion and power, have inculcated the meek lesson of mildness, from the illustrious Lactantius, who has left it written that “religion was to be defended by

\* They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans—and they did not receive him—And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.—Luke ix. 52, 5.

† Matt. x. 14.



dying and not by slaying,"\* even to those in later times, who have found themselves in circumstances where courage was necessary to manifest a feeling so essentially evangelical. Be they in honour, seeing that it is no longer allowed for us to reap honour by professing these principles, living, as we do, in an age and country, when opposite sentiments cannot be maintained without infamy, and in which, if men have not (would that they had !) renounced hatred, they have, at least, learned that religion cannot sanction it ; when, if expediency, or the violence of passion be ever urged as an excuse for cruelty and oppression, it is admitted that religion is too pure to allow of such a pretext ; that religion disdains to lead men to good but by means of what is good.

\* *Defendenda enim est religio non occidendo sed moriendo ; non sævitia sed patientia ; non scelere sed fide ; illa enim malorum sunt, hæc bonorum. Et necesse est bonum in religione versari, non malum. Nam si sanguine, si tormentis, si malo religionem defendere velis, jam non defendetur illa, sed polluetur atque violabitur. Nihil tam voluntarium quam religio, in qua si animus sacrificantis aversus est, jam sublata, jam nulla est.—L.C.F. Lactantiū Divin. Institut. lib. v. c. 20.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

## ON THE DOCTRINE OF PENANCE.

“ La doctrine de la penitence causa une nouvelle  
 “ subversion dans la morale, déjà confondue par la  
 “ distinction arbitraire des péchés. Sans doute c’étoit  
 “ une promesse consolante que celle du pardon du ciel  
 “ pour le retour à la vertu ; et cette opinion est telle-  
 “ ment conforme aux besoins et aux faiblesses de  
 “ l’homme qu’elle a fait partie de toutes les religions.  
 “ Mais les casuistes avaient dénaturé cette doctrine en  
 “ imposant des formes précises à la pénitence, à la con-  
 “ fession, et à l’absolution. Un seul acte de foi et de  
 “ ferveur fut déclaré suffisant pour effacer une longue  
 “ liste de crimes.”—Page 415.

As I do not pretend to sufficient erudition to discuss the assertion of our author, that the promise of the pardon of heaven for a return to virtue is an opinion which forms a part of every religious system, I shall pass it by altogether. From what little I have gathered from books on different religions, and on the Pagan religion in particular, I am inclined to think that many proposed to their followers expiatory ceremonies which, by their own virtue, purified those who performed them from

their sins, without rendering it necessary for them to return to virtue; and that the idea, as well as the term conversion, belongs essentially and solely to the Christian religion. But this question, however important, is not necessarily involved in the argument, and we may defend the Catholic doctrine of penance, in the fullest manner, from the censures in the above passage, without alluding to it: in fact, these very censures will afford an opportunity of demonstrating the eminent reasonableness and perfection of the doctrine.

These charges may be reduced to the three following: namely, that by imposing precise forms of penance, the true doctrine of it had been disfigured; that these forms were imposed by the casuists; and that a single act of faith and fervour was deemed sufficient to cancel a long list of crimes. Let us examine them, one by one, not in that order in which they are stated above, but in that which seems more suited to their full development, in the investigation it is necessary to undertake in explaining what is the real doctrine of the Church.

### I.

*Who has fixed the precise forms of Penance?*

Seeing that the gospel has expressly conferred upon its ministers the power of remitting and re-

taining sin, it follows of necessity that there must be some precise form for executing this power: but whose province was it to ordain and impose these forms? Under the supposition that this power was usurped by the Casuists, the whole economy of the spiritual government must have been changed; not to say that it is impossible to conceive that they, who were no constituted body, and possessed no legislative organ, could have agreed in establishing these forms according to the same principles and the same rules. Again, how can it be supposed that all Churches should have received them from persons without authority, that the authorities themselves submitted to them, since no one believed himself to be exempt? How is it that the Popes themselves came to suffer a law to be imposed on them by the mere will of the Casuists, under the operation of which they themselves confessed their sins at the feet of an inferior, asking absolution of him, and submitting to the penance he ordained? Besides, would it not outrage all probability to imagine that the Greeks—separated, alas! too much from the Catholic Church, and separated too some centuries before the Casuists were even heard of—should have adopted from them the forms of penance, which they hold in common with us in all its essential parts? When was it that the



Casuists committed this act of usurpation? And, lastly, how was the authority to bind and loose excised before the Casuists invented the mode?

The forms of penance, of confession, and of absolution, have been laid down by the Church from its very origin, as all history attests: nor could it be otherwise; for without them it would have been impossible to exercise the authority to remit or retain sin: indeed, it is impossible to imagine forms more simple, and more conformable to the spirit of this authority. Equally so is it to conceive that any but the Church herself could have interfered with the regulation of such a practice.

## II.

### *Conditions of Penance, according to the Catholic Doctrine.*

Let us now examine the doctrine which is accused of having corrupted morality, and see if it be the doctrine of the Church. *A single act of faith and fervour was declared sufficient to blot out a long list of crimes.* Of this opinion one part has been condemned, and neither the other part nor the whole proposition have ever been taught.

As to the former, it is sufficient to recollect that the Council of Trent condemned the doctrine, that

“the sinner is justified by faith alone,” as soon as it was proposed.\*

As to the second, I will make bold to assert, not only that no council or papal decree, but not even any devotional tract, has ever said that a single act of faith and fervour is enough to cancel sins. It is, however, a doctrine of the Church that they may be cancelled by contrition, accompanied by the intention of submitting, as soon as possible, to the tribunal of penance.

He who thinks this is a mere question of words, deceives himself: it is a question of ideas, if ever there was one.

Fervour signifies only the force and intensity of a sentiment; it generally supposes a pious feeling, but does not express its precise object—contrition, on the other hand, expresses a positive sentiment. To attribute to fervour the effect of blotting out sins would therefore be to assert a confused and indeterminate idea, without relation to the effect: when it is attributed to contrition, a sentiment is specified, which, according to the Scriptures, and all the ideas of right reason enlightened by them,

“Si quis dixerit sola fide impium justificari, ita ut intelligat nihil aliud requiri, quod ad justificationis gratiam consequendam cooperetur, et nulla ex parte necesse est eum suæ voluntatis motu preparari, atque disponi; anathema sit.”—Sess. vi. de Justificatione, Canon xi.

disposes the mind of the sinner to receive the grace of justification. In order then to have a just idea of the Catholic faith in this matter, we must examine what contrition is; and we shall discover it from the definitions of the Church. "Contrition is a grief of the mind, and a detestation of sin committed, accompanied by a resolution to sin no more. . . . The holy synod declares, that this contrition contains not only a cessation from sin, and the resolution and commencement of a new life, but a hatred of the past. . . . Besides, it teaches, that although it sometimes happens that this contrition be perfect through charity, and thus reconciles a man to God before the sacrament of penance be actually received; yet the reconciliation ought not to be attributed to the contrition alone, without the desire of complying with the sacrament which is included in it."\*

Reason alone, it is certain, could never have

\* *Contritio, quæ primum locum inter dictos pœnitentis actus habet, animi dolor ac detestatio est de peccato commisso, cum proposito non peccandi de cætero...Declarat igitur sancta synodus, hanc contritionem, non solum cessationem a peccato, et vitæ novæ propositum, et inchoationem, sed veteris etiam odium continere.....Docet præterea, etsi contritionem hanc aliquando charitate perfectam esse contingat, hominemque Deo reconciliare, priusquam hoc sacramentum actu suscipiatur; ipsam nihilominus reconciliationem ipsi contritioni, sine sacramenti voto, quod in illa includitur, non esse adscribendam."*—*Conc. Trid., Sess. xiv., De Pœnitentia iv.*

discovered such a doctrine, for its foundation is charity ; but when it is announced by Revelation, reason is constrained to approve of it : in fact, all the opinions that are endeavoured to be substituted for it, end by being abandoned as untenable. The man who transgresses the commands of God, becomes his enemy, and renders himself unjust ; but as soon as he acknowledges his fault, is sorry for it, detesting both the fault and its consequences, and resolves to sin no more ; proposing to return to God by the means which God in his mercy has appointed for this purpose : when, I say, he proposes to satisfy the divine justice, to remedy, as far as in him lies, the evil he has done, he is then no longer the same man, and, if I may so express it, he is no longer unjust ; for in good truth, he has that same sentiment, not only of sin in general, but also of his own sins in particular, which God himself, the fountain of all justice, feels in regard of them. It is therefore essentially consistent with reason to believe, that a man thus changed should be reconciled to God.

But it has been repeatedly said that, at least, an immoral consequence results from this doctrine, inasmuch as that many persons think it an easy matter to procure this feeling of contrition, and therefore encourage themselves in the commission of crime through the facility of obtaining pardon.



Why do they think so? Who has told them so? If they believe the Church when she teaches, that contrition reconciles man to God, why do they not believe her when she says, that the natural effect of sin is to harden the heart; that the return to God is an especial gift of his mercy, and that a contempt for his invitation renders it always more difficult? If the Church could have consented to abandon a truth every time that men deduced some absurd consequences from it, in order to avoid those consequences, she would long ago have abandoned every truth she professes. But she opposes this miserable error by inculcating them all, and in this case especially, who is there that can refuse to admire her maternal care in the multiplied precautions which she uses to prevent the sinner from deceiving himself, and turning the gifts of mercy to his own condemnation? Let us now say a word concerning these precautions, as we are treating of the administration of penance. Suffice it that, having shown what is the doctrine of the Church, we boldly affirm it to be the only reasonable doctrine, demanding, as we do, which, of all others that are known, could be substituted for it, or what could be invented that could be put in comparison with it. We must either take up with the monstrous and absurd, and therefore immoral, doctrine, that there is no atonement; or, if it be granted, that

man may return to that God who has created him for himself, it must be admitted, that faith in Him who alone can save him, accompanied by a change of heart and life, with a sincere reparation for the evils he has committed, affords the only true way for this return. This then is the beaten track by which the Church leads us. This it is, in which the unlearned man may bend his course with the full security of one who feels himself guided by a strong, a beneficent, and a certain hand. This it is, in which so many enlightened souls have accomplished, and still accomplish their race; beholding the frightful precipice to which every other path leads, filled with humility, filled with gratitude, in proportion to the clearness of that light by which they are illumined.

### III.

#### *Spirit and effect of the prescribed forms of Penance.*

What then, lastly, are these penitential forms? The confession of our faults, in order that the priest may know what is the state of the sinner's soul, without which knowledge, it is impossible for him to exercise his authority; the prescribing of works of satisfaction, and the sentence of absolution. It is not for me to undertake the defence of them, for who is there who can deny them to be the means the most

simple, the most indispensable, and conformable to the evangelical institution for the application of the mercy of God, and the blood of propitiation? Nevertheless I cannot pass over in silence, I do not say all the effects of this divine institution, (for I may refer my readers to the various apologetic works which enumerate them, and to the praises bestowed on them by many, even of those who have not preserved the practice,) but at least those effects which are connected with the return to the path of virtue, of those who had gone astray, and the confirmation of the just in the way of the Lord.

The man, alas! who has fallen into sin, is but too prone to continue in that unhappy state; and his being deprived of the testimony of a good conscience, afflicts, without improving him. So much so, that it is acknowledged the guilty man for the most part adds crime to crime, in order to banish remorse, like those who in alarm and terror at a conflagration, throw whatever lies in their way into the flames, as if to quench them. Remorse, that sentiment, which by the aid of those hopes inspired by religion is changed into a holy feeling of contrition, and which by their influence is so useful, is but too often fruitless, or even injurious without them. In the depths of conscience, the wicked man hears that terrible voice, which declares that he is no longer innocent; and a still more dreadful one which says, that he can



be so no more: he looks on virtue as a thing that is lost, and would fain persuade himself that he can do without it; that it is but a name, praised by men, because they find it useful in others, or venerated by them through an ignorant prejudice; he tries to keep his mind occupied by those vicious sentiments, which encourage him in sin, because those of virtue are a torment to him. Still for the most part, those who assert that virtue is an empty name, are far from being persuaded of it: If an inward voice of authority were to announce to them that they might re-possess it, they would believe in its reality, or rather they would confess they had always believed it. Precisely <sup>t</sup>is does religion for the man who will listen to her voice; she speaks in the name of a God who has promised to blot out of his remembrance the iniquities of a repenting sinner, she promises pardon, and offers the ransom for sin; mystery of wisdom and of mercy! A mystery indeed, which reason cannot penetrate, but which it never can sufficiently admire; a mystery which in the inestimable value of our ransom, presents an infinite idea of the injustice of sin, and of the means of its expiation, an immense motive of repentance, an immense motive of confidence and hope.

But religion does not stop here, it removes also those other obstacles, which men have thrown in the way of a return to virtue. The wicked man avoids



the society of those who are not like himself, because he dreads those whom he thinks proud of their virtue. Is it likely that he would open his mind to persons who would take that opportunity of showing him their own superiority? What consolation would he derive from those who could not restore virtue to him, who stand aloof from him, lest they should appear contaminated, and who speak of him with contempt, that it may be always evident how much they despise vice? What consolation could those give him who thus force him to seek the company of persons who are equally guilty with himself, and who therefore have the same reasons for laughing at virtue? Mere human virtue has in it too much of the pride of the Pharisee, who compares himself with the publican, who stands far from him, for he imagines not that such a man can become his equal, and who would, if he were able, always keep him in the abjection of sin.

But this divine Religion of love and pardon has instituted ministers of reconciliation between God and man; it urges them to be pure, that so their lives may inspire their words with confidence, that the sinner who approaches them may feel that he has returned to the society of the virtuous; but at the same time it urges them to be humble, that while they are pure the sinner may recur to them without fear of being repulsed. The sinner will

approach without dread to the man who confesses that he too is a sinner; to the man who on hearing his offences gives him assurance, that he who confesses his sin is dear to God, who sees in the repenting sinner the grace of him who calls back the hearts of men to himself. No, the sinner need not dread the man who beholds in him the wandering sheep borne home on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd, who regards the man at his feet as an object of joy to the heavenly choirs: ah! no he need not dread the man who handles his wounds with compassion and respect, who sees them already moistened with that divine blood, which he is about to invoke over them. O, astonishing wisdom of the Religion of Christ! It imposes on the penitent certain works of satisfaction, by which the change in his heart may become more evident, and that he may perform acts contrary to those he practised in his errors; acts, by which he may be strengthened in virtuous habits, and in the victory over himself; acts, by which he maintains charity in his heart, and compensates in a measure for the evil he has done. For Religion not only will not grant him pardon, unless he remedies, as far as in him lies, the injury he has done his neighbour, but she also subjects him to penance for every kind of sin, which is nothing less than an increase of every virtue. She enjoins her ministers to ascertain as much as possible the reality of this

repentance and resolution of amendment, an enquiry this, which must tend not only to prevent an encouragement of vice by the facility of pardon, but also to give a more consoling ground of confidence to the man who truly repents; yes! she is all anxiety and pity. And if her ministers without reason forgive him who is not really changed, she warns them that instead of absolving him, they will themselves be bound; so great is her care lest man should change into poison the remedies that God in his mercy has bestowed upon our weakness.

The man who is admitted to penance with these dispositions, is certainly in the road to virtue; he who has heard the consoling word from the minister of the Lord that he is absolved, feels re-established in the possession of innocence, he begins anew to walk in the right way with cheerful step, and with the greater fervour in proportion as he reflects on the bitter fruits he has gathered in the paths of vice, in proportion as he feels that virtuous sentiments and actions are the means that Religion presents to him to increase his confidence, that his footsteps in that crooked way are blotted out.

Religion, then, receives a man from the world in a state of crime, and she restores him to it in a state of virtue, nor was it in the power of any other than Religion to effect such a change. What mortal



mind could ever have conceived; where is the man who would have ventured to institute an order of men, whose object should be to wait for the sinner, to seek him out, to teach virtue, to call back to it him who applied to them, to speak to him with that sincerity which in the world is not found, to put him on his guard against every delusion, and to console him in proportion as he amends?

The world complains that too many exercise this office as a mere profession, and by this term, which in other states throws no dishonour on the most noble functions, it shews to us what a distance it places between this and every other calling, how it feels that the institution of this office is so august, that what is universally allowed in others, is absolutely to be rejected in this. But forsooth, is the race of holy ministers worthy of their functions extinct? No; God has not abandoned his Church: He preserves in it men who have not, and desire not any other occupation than to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of their brethren, and who look to this as the only reward for their perils, their sufferings, their laborious lives, sometimes even a violent death, and often a lingering martyrdom. Let the world then, however fain to complain of a different sort, at least look on these with veneration and gratitude: in every zealous, humble, and disinterested minister,



let it acknowledge a man truly great; let it call to mind with astonishment and admiration, those Europeans who traversed the deserts of America to speak of God to the savages; let it listen to the end of those soldiers of Christ, who, without any hope of worldly advantage, bent their course to China, to preach Jesus Christ, and there suffered martyrdom, and this too within the last few years, and let it glory in them as it does in all those who risk their lives for a noble cause. If it does not do this, if it derides those whom it cannot censure, if it forgets them, or calls them men of weak, miserable, and prejudiced minds, we shall then at least discover that what the world hates, is not the faults of the ministers of religion, but the ministry itself.

But it is not for those only who have cast off the yoke of the divine law, and who desire to take it again, that the sacrament of penance is profitable and necessary; it is so no less for the just. In constant war with their interior depraved inclinations, and with all the powers of evil, they are reminded by Religion to reflect in the bitterness of their hearts on their imperfections, to watch over their falls, to implore pardon for them, to make amends for them by acts of virtuous self-denial, and to form constant resolutions of making still further progress in virtue. 'Tis penance that nips

their vices in the bud, this it is, that “preserves the treasure of innocence in earthen vessels.”\*

An institution, then, which obliges men to judge themselves with severity, to measure their dispositions and their actions by the rule of perfection, which gives them the strongest motives to exclude from this judgment all hypocrisy, by teaching them that it is noticed and examined by God himself, is an institution in the highest degree conducive to morality.

How is it that such an institution should have been unknown to so many writers? How is it, that so often there has been attributed to it a spirit so perfectly opposed to its own?

It is impossible not to feel a painful sensation, when we read a work that professes a love of truth and perfection, and where the most studied reflections are directed to the eliciting of moral sentiment and through it of religious feeling, to find the following proposition; that Catholicism accords absolution to the mere confession of sins.†

\* “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” 2 Cor. iv. 7.

† “Le Catholicisme, en admettant les pratiques à compenser les crimes, en faisant acheter l’absolution par des aveux, et les faveurs par des offrandes, blessoit trop ouvertement les plus simples notions de la raison pour pouvoir résister au progrès des lumières.” *Education pratique*, trad. de l’anglais par M. Pictet. Genève de l’impr. de la Bibliot. Britan. Préface du Traducteur,

We speak not here of deductions, or of far-fetched and complicated influences, but we speak of a fact: any one may learn from any Catholic whether the confession (*aveu*) of sin alone is sufficient to obtain absolution; every Catholic will answer, no; every Catholic will repeat with the Council of Trent, "If any one denies, that for the entire and perfect remission of sins, three acts are required of the penitent as the matter of the sacrament of penance, namely, contrition, confession,

page viii, and in the 2nd edition, at page vii. Doubtless, such a religion would shock the most simple notions of reason. But, supposing this were true of Catholicism, still would it remain to be explained, how such men as Pascal and Bossuet could have consented to it, and how it is that all Catholics are so void of the most simple notions of reason. But not being the fact, the explanation is unnecessary.

We do not enlarge on the other two charges brought against Catholicism, because they are not immediately connected with the argument, and the refutation of them is naturally involved in that of the first; seeing that the practises of worship and satisfaction, made on the conditions we have so often mentioned, are, in themselves, calculated to atone for sin and to obtain mercy, and, without these essential conditions, they are neither proposed nor valued in the doctrine of the Church. I have adduced this example, because it is important to show one in which it is evident that the aversion to the maxims of the Church is founded on an erroneous supposition; and I have selected this in particular, because, in a book where I would wish every thing to breathe peace and goodwill, I deemed it right to quote authors, to whom I might pay a tribute of esteem even while I combated their opinions.



and satisfaction, let him be anathema.\* Moreover, to receive this sacrament without these dispositions, is a sacrilege and an additional heinous sin. So true it is, that absolution is not necessarily accorded to mere confession, that it is sometimes denied after confession, whilst it is sometimes given without it, as in the case of the dying who are not in a state to make it, but give evidence that they are so disposed.

Let us consider, but for a moment, the spirit of the Church as evinced in her doctrine concerning the sacraments, and we shall see how the whole economy of them is directed to the sanctification of the soul, and how much the Church abhors the substitution of empty practices for the conversion of the heart. The Catholic faith makes a distinction in the sacraments, not less proper than important, calling some sacraments for "the living," that is, for those who are in the state of grace, and others for "the dead," that is, for those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Both are instituted by Jesus Christ, and in order to sanctification; but it is not lawful to approach the former, if we are not

\* "Si quis negaverit ad integram et perfectam remissionem requiri tres actus in pœnitente, quasi materiam sacramenti pœnitentiæ, videlicet, contritionem, confessionem, et satisfactionem . . . anathema sit." Conc. Trid. sess. xiv., can. iv.



in a state of grace, and why? because, according to the Church, the first and indispensable step to every degree of sanctification is to return to God, to love justice, and to hate sin.

There is in man a superstitious tendency, which induces him to confide in mere external forms, and to recur to religious ceremonies in order to stifle remorse, without atoning for the sins he has committed or renouncing his passions: Paganism, I think, exactly accommodated itself to this tendency. But what religion was it that essentially, perpetually, and evidently opposed this disposition? None but the Catholic religion, undoubtedly. As all the sacraments are efficacious means of sanctification, why would it not be lawful to have recourse to them indiscriminately, if the mere performance of acts of worship were allowed to compensate for crimes? What means of sanctification could be easier than that of the Eucharist, which communicates, in reality, the Divine Victim, and unites man to holiness itself? Yet the Church declares it to be, not only useless, but sacrilegious for any one to receive this sacrament, who is not in a state of grace; He who is the atonement itself, becomes a condemnation in the heart of an evil man. The Church obliges sinners who wish to come to this fountain of grace to pass through those sacraments which reconcile them to God: penance, to which it

is not lawful to approach without sorrow for sin, and a resolution to begin a new life, and Baptism, which in those who are come to the use of reason, requires the same dispositions. Could the Church show more plainly that she not only counts as nothing, but that she even refuses to receive external performances, when they are not evidences of a sincere love of virtue?

Whence could an opinion so contrary to the spirit of the Church have originated? I think it has arisen from an equivocal expression. Confession being the most apparent part of the sacrament of penance, it has become a custom to call, improperly, the whole sacrament, confession. But let it be observed, that this inaccuracy in speaking has not corrupted the idea, because the necessity of contrition, confession, and satisfaction, is so universally taught, that it may positively be affirmed, that there is no catechism which does not inculcate it, nor any child admitted to confession who is ignorant of it.

## CHAPTER IX.

## ON THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

“ La vertu au lieu d'être la tâche constante de toute la vie, ne fut plus qu'un compte à régler à l'article de la mort. Il n'y eut plus aucun pécheur si aveuglé par ses passions, qu'il ne projetât de donner, avant de mourir, quelques jours au soin de son salut ; et dans cette confiance, il abandonnoit la bride à ses penchans déréglés. Les casuistes avoient dépassé leur but, en nourrissant une telle confiance ; ce fut en vain qu'ils prêchèrent alors contre le *retard de la conversion*, ils étoient eux-mêmes les créateurs de ce dérèglement d'esprit, inconnu aux anciens moralistes ; l'habitude étoit prise de ne considérer que la mort du pécheur, et non sa vie, et elle devint universelle.” Pag. 415, 416.

THIS last objection to the Catholic doctrine of penance is as much as to say that a means has been proposed for the remission of sins so easy, so much at the command of the sinner at all times, that, certain of pardon (if we may so express it), he has been induced to continue in vice, and procrastinate his repentance to the last ; and that in this way, not only has he spent his whole life in violation of the maxims of religion, but religion herself has encour-

raged him to do evil, and that in consequence morality has been overthrown.

This lamentable effect, it would seem, is attributed without any discrimination to the doctrine itself, to the opinions of the people, and to the instructions of the clergy, which are in fact the three points to be considered in the present disquisition. Let us examine them one by one, that they may appear in their right light, first stating the propositions, which it is evident ought to be the result of this examination.

1st. The doctrine of the Church on this point is the only one conformable to the Holy Scriptures; it is the only one that can be reconciled with reason and morality.

2dly. The abuse of the doctrine is not chargeable upon the doctrine itself; it is an abuse in practise, and not one in theory; it is individual and not general in its operation; nor can it be rooted out in a manner serviceable to mankind but by the right knowledge and the love of the doctrine itself.

3rdly. The clergy (taken as a body) do not teach the false view of the doctrine, neither do they dissemble the correct one.

# I.

## *With regard to the Doctrine,*

In all moral questions it is necessary that we ex-



amine the nature of any doctrine controverted. To form a judgment of it merely from its effects, is in my opinion at least an incomplete, nay, a fallacious mode of proceeding, and on many accounts ; because it supposes that there are no moral principles in Revelation and reason to which this doctrine can be reduced ; because it supposes their effects to be so complicated or so extensive, that it is impossible to estimate them, I do not say with precision, but even with that degree of approach towards reality, which it is necessary that they should exhibit, under the idea that they are to be taken as proofs and sole proofs ; and finally, because as it is not pretended that they are all derived from the doctrine, they ought not all to be imputed to it ; and here we are introduced to another point for investigation ; let me say a word in explanation. The possible perfection to which man may be brought, ought to be the end and scope of all moral doctrine ; to effect this end, there must be a co-operation between the doctrine and the will of mankind ; hence in every case where we find the falling off from this standard of perfection existing to a greater or a less degree, the fault may arise from a defect in one or both of these particulars, to ascertain which is of infinite importance. It is very possible for the will to turn aside to the commission of evil, even after having received an excellent doctrine as a maxim, still more so after having received

a bad doctrine. To impute to a doctrine the evils which take place where it is held, is certainly very like accusing one man alone of the guilt which may possibly belong to another, or in which it is at least presumable that the other is an accomplice ; and it is doing this without having examined either the one or the other.

A code of morality which would undertake by its mere promulgation to conduct all men infallibly to goodness, would be very properly rejected on any proof of a failure in its operation. But as the Catholic Church holds out no such promise in regard to her morality, such a test in reference to her would be most unjust. No, her system demands minute examination ; and before her principles are pronounced to be faulty, it must be clearly established that evil effects have naturally resulted from her doctrine.\*

\* The necessity of examining the doctrine is insisted upon ; because this examination is but too much neglected, and because many persons, after having reminded us of the faults committed by Catholics, fancy that they have established the condemnation of their religion. This strange mode of reasoning is not uncommon on all questions connected with morality : wherever there are opposite parties, each one imagines he has established his own views, when he has shown the errors of the other ; each one compares his adversary's cause with some fancied standard of perfection, hence he finds but little difficulty in proving how far distant he is from it ; but we are too apt to forget that our judgment in such matters ought to be formed only after maturely weighing the comparative evils resulting from the two opposite propositions.

In the preceding chapter it has been shown that the Catholic doctrine of conversion is the only reasonable one; but as the very idea of conversion naturally presupposes its possibility at any moment

Hence arise those eternal disputes in which each person exposes to view that side of the question which favours his own argument, and thus obtains a seeming triumph; whilst he leaves his adversary full scope for triumphing in his turn, the moment he places it in another point of view.

We are reminded of instances of brutal violence sanctioned by custom or the laws, of trifles held in esteem, while things of importance are passed over, of discoveries of science and genius treated as the ravings of insanity, of voluminous disquisitions of the wisest authors to prove some absurd proposition, while they even erred in the method they took to prove it; we are told to look at good actions affording cause for persecution, and evil ones for prosperity; facts are heaped upon facts, and all that we may receive with submission their inevitable conclusion, "*So much for your good old times!*" while they rapidly pass to the discovery of a grand argument in favour of the spirit of the moderns.

On the other side we are reminded of schemes undertaken to forward the interests of justice and humanity, yet carried on by means the most ferocious and the most dreadful; of the exaltation of the passions, represented as a means of social perfection; of wisdom placed by many in voluptuousness and virtue in pride; and here again as every where else, the persecution of virtue and the triumph of vice; and the catalogue is summed in a tone of triumph with the sentence, "*So much for your enlightened age!*" and these are to be our reasons for wishing for times gone by. Foolish admiration! vain regrets! in which that leisure is consumed, that ought to be devoted to the study of the perpetual corruption of man and of the true means to remedy it, and to the application of this science to all institutions and all times.

These reflections are here given but in a cursory way, nor would they have been given at all, but that they are too often overlooked.



of life, we might with truth assert that the present proposition has been proved by the preceding. But as this possibility has been brought forward as the origin of maxims and of habits fatal to morality, it becomes necessary to discuss it by itself. When we have gone through our examination of the doctrine we shall not shrink from looking into facts; and in so doing we shall endeavour to use all possible precision in the recapitulation of numerous, varied and complicated events, above all things aiming at sincerity; for if we sought to deceive ourselves or others, our only gain would be that of being either wilfully blind or impostors: neither of them a very desirable gain.

The point controverted may be stated thus: Is it possible for a man, as long as he is in this life, from a sinner to become a just man by detesting his sins, by making amends for them, by begging pardon of God, by resolving to commit them no more, and by trusting in the mercy of God and the merits of Jesus Christ for their remission? When the sinner is thus justified, is he in a state of salvation? The Church declares that he is.

Let us consult the Scriptures, let us consult reason, and let us search for the principles and legitimate consequences of this and the contrary doctrine. Leaving, for the sake of brevity, the essential connexion of this doctrine with the whole of the



Scriptures and numerous passages where it is understood, we shall notice one only, which is conclusive.

“The justice of the just shall not deliver him, in what day soever he shall sin: and the wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness.....And if I shall say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and he do penance for his sin, and do judgment and justice, and if that wicked man restore the pledge, and render what he had robbed, and walk in the commandments of life, and do no unjust thing, he shall surely live and shall not die. None of his sins, which he hath committed shall be imputed to him: he hath done judgment and justice, he shall surely live.” (Ezekiel xxxiii. 12, 16, 18, 21.)

To the Scriptures then must be attributed the principle and all the consequences of this doctrine. It is of them that we must demand account, or rather it is to them that we are indebted for having revealed to us the essential point of morality contained in those words. In fact, if justice consists in the conformity of our will (and of our actions as a necessary consequence) to the law of God, the sinner who obtains pardon and becomes conformed to it, becomes just. If justice be a positive state of the human mind; if conversion, if the application of the mercy of God through the merits of the mediator be not a vain fiction, the man who has entered into this

state is actually the friend of God, and deserving of reward. If the time of probation be confined to this life, if rewards and punishments have a reference to this time, (and all religious morality is founded upon this maxim, and all philosophers from first to last have regarded this maxim as a boon conferred by Religion, as a supplement filling up what was wanting in human motives to effect the encrease of moral good, and the diminution of moral evil,) the man, who at the end of this term of probation is in a state of justice, must needs be in a state of salvation.

Nor let us lose sight of the intrinsic and extrinsic conditions of conversion spoken of in the preceding chapter, and we shall be in a situation to say whether reason can refuse these principles of morality, or admit any others.

What then are the legitimate consequences of these principles in their practical application to the conduct of life? They alone suffice for producing consequences the most moral, that can enter into the conceptions of the human mind; but to be better convinced of this, let us examine the doctrine in all its parts.

If on the approaching danger of an inundation a man were told of the necessity of removing to a place of safety, and were to ask whether he would be sure to perish if he did not retire at that moment,

what would be the answer that would naturally be given to him? "No, it is not certain that you will perish by delaying your removal; the water itself may perhaps wash a plank near you, on which you may save yourself: it would be folly to deny a possibility which is in the nature of things, nor would you suffer yourself to be misled by such a threat. But you put the question amiss, you are wrong in looking at so important a matter in an unreasonable point of view; the longer you delay, the more difficult your safety becomes; you should consider this difficulty and act accordingly, whereas, if you examine the possibility alone, you leave aside the most important part of the question."

Just so is it with respect to the salvation of the soul.

Conversion is always possible, saith the Church, nor can she say otherwise; but it is difficult, and this difficulty increases in proportion as time passes away, as sins accumulate, as vicious habits increase, and as the patience of God is wearied and becomes deaf to the sinner's call; consequently the difficulty is greatest when we are about to die. The Church not only does not flatter sinners that they may overcome this difficulty, but she even warns them that they know not whether they will have it in their power to encounter it, so uncertain are the time and the mode of our death.



Hence the rules of conduct, which a reasonable man (and Religion like every system founded on truth, addresses herself to the reason) may derive from this doctrine are reduced to one, which our heavenly Master himself has given as the result of his instructions, "Be ye therefore ready, for in an hour when ye think not, the Son of Man will come." (Luke xii. 40.)

It is therefore reasonable to live in such a manner that we may present ourselves before God with confidence at any moment; conversion, therefore, is as necessary for sinners at every moment, as perseverance is for the just; a conclusion this, than which it were impossible to conceive one more moral, more powerful, or more universal in its application to every action. So far therefore is it from being true that this doctrine has a reference solely to the hour of death, that it is eminently calculated to influence the whole conduct of life.

But it will be objected, "what matters it whether immoral consequences be legitimately derived or not, seeing that they have been deduced, and that men have regulated their lives upon them? You urge that wicked Catholics have reasoned falsely: be it so, but it is nevertheless this doctrine that has ever afforded them a source of mistaken confidence, and hence it is that they have spent their lives in crime, animated by the hope of dying well."



Supposing even that this were the case, I ask still, what am I to do? Either it must be proved to be beneficial for men to be left without any doctrine on the means of a return to God, on his judgments, and on the rewards and punishments of a future life, or else that one should be delivered to them altogether different from that asserted by Revelation, and freed from all possibility of misconstruction. Let any man or sect come forward who dares to arrogate the power of doing this, and shall not the Church withstand him? Shall she not say, because, as you assert, men have deduced criminal consequences from a true and holy doctrine, is it for you to deliver one that is arbitrary? If their inclinations were not corrected by an infallible rule, to what extent of error will they not stray with a false one?

But supposing such a one gave not ear to the remonstrance of the Church, nay, that he disregarded all these difficulties and reasoned thus:

“Catholics have been taught that as long as the sinner lives he may be converted and justified. They have been told, it is true, that it is an absurdity to render their own salvation more difficult, with similar cautions. But in spite of all these limitations the effect has been that *there never was a sinner so blinded by his passions, who did not intend to devote some days previous to his death to the care*

*of his salvation; and with this belief gave loose to his disorderly inclinations.* A remedy, therefore, and not a palliation, is wanting, we must go to the root of the evil, in other words, we must get rid of a doctrine which is necessarily ill-understood, and which (human nature being what it is) certainly produces evil results. Still in such matters we cannot remain without a doctrine of some kind: a middle doctrine is impossible; it is therefore necessary to establish the opposite doctrine, which is, that it is impossible for a man to return to God, it being evident that the possibility once admitted, it is of necessity applicable to every moment of life, even of course to the last.

“Catholics have also been taught that a man’s eternal doom depends on the state in which he departs this life. True, it has also been taught that the character of a man’s death results for the most part from the nature of his life, in a word, a happy death is so great a blessing, that a whole life may well be employed in praying for it and in deserving it: not only is it not promised to the wicked, but ’tis threatened that they shall die in their sins: that on the contrary, the way to be sure of dying well is to live well, and other maxims of a like nature: but in spite of all this, *men have fallen into the habit of only looking at the death of the sinner and not at his life, and the habit has become universal.* We ought

therefore to teach, that a man's doom does not depend on the state in which he departs this life."

Let him then deliver this doctrine, but let him also tell us what will be the consequences derived from it in the moral conduct of the human race. Man cannot return to God! for the sinner then there remains nought but despair; a state incompatible with every sentiment of piety, humanity, or dignity; a horrible state, in which a man, were it possible for him to remain in it and to be quiet, could adopt no other rule than that of purchasing for himself as much pleasure as he could, no matter at what cost. Man cannot return to God! away then with repentance, away with prayer, away with hope, away with redemption, away with the gospel: away then with the admonition of the sinner, cease to urge him to a change of life on supernatural motive. The doom of man depends not on the state in which he departs this life! away then with your distinctions between justice and injustice; for what would be that justice that could not restore a man to the friendship of his God, and what would be the friendship of that God that could consign such a justified sinner to eternal woes? No longer would it be true that there were rewards and punishments for the actions of this mortal life, for we are no longer to believe that there is a state in which a man can deserve either the one or the other: alas! in one word, there will no longer



be one certain or overruling motive to act uprightly for a single moment of our lives.

Such would be some of the consequences that must naturally result from such a doctrine, and with justice would they be deduced, could it once be promulgated and received, for alas! men are better logicians, when they reason on false principles of morality, than on true ones; and 'tis obvious, for the consequences derived from them are less opposed to man's corrupt nature, and the understanding walks in them without being arrested at each step by contending passions. Under the dominion of the Catholic religion, 'tis passion that leads a man astray, but under that of the antagonist doctrine, the more he reasoned, the more he would err. In the Catholic doctrine the surest way to prevent immoral consequences, is to refer men back to the doctrine; but here it is in the doctrine, that the immorality would consist. Such a doctrine is, however, so contrary to reason and to every sentiment of religion, that it has never been proposed, nor could it ever be received. Nor have we noticed it, but to prove that there is no alternative between the doctrine of the Church and an absurdity.

Let us now examine the state, or rather, the nature of those erroneous opinions, which have existed in Catholic countries on this subject, embrac-



cing various times and places, and let us ascertain to what extent these disorders have reached, springing as they do, not from the doctrine, but in spite of it, and in opposition to it.

## II.

### *With regard to opinions.*

Erroneous opinions cannot be charged upon the doctrine.

This, I think, I have already demonstrated, and the proposition is only repeated here in order to keep up the train of ideas.

Neither do they arise from the teaching of it : of this we will speak more at large bye and bye.

They arise from the perversion of the heart ; in fact, the man who is determined to live contrary to the law, yet cannot persuade himself that the law is false, endeavours to reconcile as he can his actions with his belief. Man requires to be at peace with his understanding ; to act according to reason is always the course he would adopt, but when he is determined to act according to his passions, it is by means of sophistry that he makes peace between them and his reason.

Religion teaches him that God is merciful towards him who repents, and he says, I am determined to repent some day or other.

This delusion is a practical and not a speculative

error: the difference between the two is great. By practical errors, I mean those into which a man voluntarily falls, owing to circumstances, in order to justify, in some way, to his reason, the evil he has already resolved to commit; and by speculative errors, those which are habitually entertained, even when there is no impulse of interest. These operate at all times, and are powerful causes of perversion: the mildest man may be drawn by an erroneous opinion into crime, to which he would not be led without it. Practical errors, on the contrary, are only admitted by minds already corrupted, and exist only while the passions are in a state of excitement; they result, not from discussion, deliberation, or argument, but they are rather a mode of getting rid of an argument.

If a man stopped to reason upon conversion, he would be forced to conclude upon the necessity of immediate conversion; but in order to avoid a conclusion, from which he shrinks, he says to himself, I will reform at a future time: he does not follow up the train of thought, but seeks a distraction.

Hence arises another essential difference. Errors of this kind are individual and not general in their operation; I mean, they are not propagated by way of discussion, nor are they regarded as principles publicly recognized, or as a part of universal science. To a man disposed to be vicious, there is hardly

any thing which does not furnish an excuse, nor is it his object that others should participate in it, still less is he disposed to argue the point, for he is well aware that he is incapable of maintaining his position. This error is not propagated by making proselytes : a gross error indeed it is, and many fall into it, yet it can boast of no false teachers or deluded disciples.

Finally, it can only be eradicated by the knowledge and love of the doctrine, of which it is the perversion.

In order to remove abuses in a manner serviceable to mankind, it is necessary to put things in a better condition without them, than they were in with them. I hope I have succeeded in demonstrating, that to substitute any other for the Catholic doctrine of conversion, would be but to create a succession of errors, still worse in their effects, and no less certain and universal in their operation : the only means of diminishing which, is to diffuse, to study, and to love that religion which commands the practice of virtue, teaches us in what it consists, while it points out and opens all the ways that lead to it. When we reflect for a moment on the holy maxims of this religion, we ascertain to what a pitch of ignorance, forgetfulness, and blindness a man must have arrived, when he can live in wickedness from the hope of repenting at a future day. It suffices not to do violence to the Scriptures

and to tradition, in order to derive from them any countenance for such a hope; it is out of the question; both the one and the other strive against it; both pronounce sentence against it; the man who would indulge such a hope must shut his ears to the voice of the Scriptures and of tradition, he must banish it from his recollection.

No sooner does a man approach them with an understanding and a heart opened to receive them, than he feels he has no hope, unless he employs every portion of that time for which he must give an account to God, in walking in the law of God, and that there is no time allowed for sin; that it is always necessary to 'walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time;' (Ephes. v. 5, 16) 'and that the only reasonable conduct is to labour to make our calling and election sure.' (2 Peter, i. 10.)

### III.

#### *With Regard to the Inculcation of the Doctrine.*

The clergy do not teach a false doctrine, neither do they conceal the truth.

Every one must perceive that the accused are too numerous to be brought to trial; still we may boldly defy our accusers to make good their charge, in reference to the instructions of the great mass of the clergy, to their sermons, or their devotional



works, with at most a very few exceptions, which we shall notice in their proper place. Let us take two or three passages of a few celebrated authors, as a specimen of their mode of inculcating it.

“ Mais serons-nous fort contents d'une pénitence commencée à l'agonie, qui n'aura jamais été éprouvée, dont jamais on n'aura vu aucun fruit ; d'une pénitence imparfaite ; d'une pénitence nulle, douteuse, si vous le voulez ; sans forces, sans réflexions, sans loisir pour en réparer les défauts ? \*

“ Ils meurent, ces pécheurs invétérés, comme ils ont vécu ; ils ont vécu dans le péché, et ils meurent dans le péché ; ils ont vécu dans la haine de Dieu, et ils meurent dans la haine de Dieu ; ils ont vécu en païens, et ils meurent en réprouvés : voilà ce que l'expérience nous apprend... De prétendre que des habitudes contractées durant toute la vie se détruisent aux approches de la mort, et que dans un moment on se fasse alors un autre esprit, un autre cœur, une autre volonté, c'est, chrétiens, la plus grossière de toutes les erreurs.. De tous les temps celui où la vraie pénitence est plus difficile, c'est le temps de la mort....Le temps de le chercher ce Dieu de miséricorde, c'est la vie ; le temps de le trouver, c'est la mort....†

“ Vous avez vécu impudique, vous mourrez

\* Bossuet, oraison funèbre d'Anne de Gonzague.

† Bourdaloue, Sermon pour le Lundi de la seconde Semaine du Carême, sur l'impénitence finale.

tel ; vous avez vécu ambitieux, vous mourrez sans que l'amour du monde et de ses vains honneurs meure dans votre cœur ; vous avez vécu mollement, sans vice ni vertu, vous mourrez lâchement et sans componction. .... Je sais que tout le temps de la vie présente est un temps de salut et de propitiation ; que nous pouvons toujours retourner à Dieu ; qu'à quelque heure que le pécheur se convertisse au Seigneur, le Seigneur se convertit à lui ; et que, tandis que le serpent d'airain est élevé, il n'est point de plaie incurable ; c'est une vérité de la foi ; mais je sais aussi que chaque grâce spéciale dont vous abusez peut-être la dernière de votre vie... Car non seulement vous vous promettez la grâce de la conversion, c'est-à-dire cette grâce qui change le cœur ; mais vous vous promettez encore la grâce qui nous fait mourir dans la sainteté et dans la justice ; la grâce qui consomme la sanctification d'une âme, la grâce de la persévérance finale ; mais c'est la grâce des seuls élus, c'est le plus grand de tous les dons, c'est la consommation de toutes les grâces, c'est le dernier trait de la bienveillance de Dieu, sur une âme, c'est le fruit d'une vie entière d'innocence et de piété, c'est la couronne réservée à ceux qui ont légitimement combattu..... Et vous présumez que le plus signalé de tous les bienfaits sera le prix de la plus ingrate de toutes les vies ? .... Que pouvez-vous sou-

haïter de plus favorable pour vous à la mort, que d'avoir le temps, et d'être en état de chercher Jésus-Christ, que le chercher en effet, et de lui offrir des larmes de douleur et de pénitence ? C'est tout ce que vous pouvez vous promettre, de plus favorable pour ce dernier moment. Et cependant (cette vérité me fait trembler), cependant, que vous permet Jésus-Christ d'espérer de vos recherches même, et de vos larmes, si vous les renvoyez jusque-la ? Vous me chercherez, et vous mourrez dans votre péché. *Queritis me, et in peccato vestro moriamini....* Tout ce que je sais, c'est que les sacrements du salut appliqués alors sur un pécheur, consomment peut-être sa réprobation.... tout ce que je sais, c'est que tous les Pères qui ont parlé de la pénitence des mourans, en ont parlé en des termes qui font trembler...."\*

Maxims preached thus resolutely and positively by such men as these, constituted, exclusively, the instruction of the Church on this subject.

Let it not be objected that these are French authors, whereas the question is, as to the effects of the Catholic Religion in Italy. On the contrary, it is quite to the point to quote French authors, as it is proved by them that it is not in Italy alone that this mental disorder, as our author very properly

\* Massillon, "Sermon pour le Lundi pour de la seconde Semaine, sur l'impénitence finale."



calls it, requires correction. But if we must needs quote an Italian, listen to Segneri. "What is this you say, that you are in no haste about your conversion, seeing that you know full well that it is not a holy life, but a holy death, which insures salvation? Oh, deceivers of yourselves! Oh, blind reasoners! Oh, foolish resolutions! Can you promise yourselves such a death, if He, from whom you expect it, should deny it, whilst in the clearest and plainest terms, he threatens that you shall die in your sins? In peccato vestro moriemini." Segneri, Predica 10.

It will be said, perhaps, that the author of the Italian Republics is well aware and does not deny that they thus preached. "*In vain*," says he, "*did they then preach against the delay of conversion; they themselves were the authors of this mental delusion, unknown to the ancient moralists.*" What does he mean by "then?" To what epoch are we to refer, in order to find the origin of this preaching? But if the Fathers are to be reckoned amongst the ancient moralists, this disorder was certainly not unknown to some among them, who in the early ages of the Church, declaimed so much against the Clinicks.\* But

\* The Clinicks were those who, although persuaded of the truth of Christianity, continued to live as pagans, because they were unwilling to submit to its yoke, but proposed to receive baptism at the hour of death.



in a book, penned long before the era of the Casuists, the Clinics, and the Fathers, it is written, "Delay not to return to the Lord, neither put it off from day to day." (Ecclesiasticus v. 7.) No sooner was the idea of conversion given to man, than he added to it that of delay. "*In vain did they preach against the delay of conversion.*" In vain? Why? Was it that they preached things not conformable to reason? or was it that they failed to prove that the delay of conversion was a madness? or that one rational objection could be made to their discourses? or were men always to be told the most important truths in vain? No; we believe not that it has always been in vain. True, the good seed of the word may fall by the way side, on stones, or among thorns; but sometimes at least it falls upon good ground: and to believe that truths, so incontrovertible, and so important should have always been preached in vain, were to despair of the grace of God, and of the reason of man.

"*They were the authors of this delusion of the mind.*" If the Christians who fall into it were to reprove them thus, would not the clergy have a right to reply: "We? Is it then by preaching conversion, that we have caused you to postpone it, and to live in sin? Is it by speaking to you of the riches of mercy, that we have taught you to de-

spise them? We have told you, 'come, let us adore, and bow down; let us fall prostrate before the Lord our Maker: we have said to you, to-day if you shall hear his voice, harden not your heart,' (Ps. xcv. 6. 8.); and you are counting upon a futurity we cannot promise you, and which we would endeavour to make you distrust; and yet we forsooth are the authors of your obstinacy! Of a truth, we are pure from your blood."\*

Thus would they answer, if words were necessary to justify the preaching of the gospel before the face of the world: or they might repel the accusation, by the charges brought against them from another quarter, of terrifying men with horrible and gloomy ideas of death and judgment, in order to induce them to repent.

But if the Church has so little confidence in death-bed conversions, why does she manifest so much anxiety to assist the dying sinner? It is just because she has so little confidence, that she uses all her endeavours; it is because the enterprise is difficult, that she employs all the charity of her heart and tongue. One ray of hope to save an erring child, is enough to keep the Church by his side; but does she hereby teach a man to be satisfied

\* " Quapropter contestor vos hodiernâ die, quia mundus sum a sanguine omnium " Wherefore I call you to witness this day, that I am free from the blood of all men. Acts xx. 26.

with only one? Ought those benevolent persons, who administer assistance to a man rescued from a river with little or no signs of life, to be accused of encouraging men to drown themselves?

And be it here observed, the language of the Church on this subject seems two-fold: she would strike terror into the minds of sinners, who, in the vigour of their health, live without God, flattering themselves with a confused idea of conversion at a distant period, whilst she seeks to give confidence to the dying. In this there is no contradiction, but rather we discern the dealings of prudence and of truth, for in both cases the sinner is disposed to look but at one side of the question, and what the Church presents to his view is the side he forgets.

To the former, so possessed with the idea of a possibility, it is useful to represent the difficulty, while to the latter, who are so deeply impressed with the difficulty alone, one of the greatest obstacles to his conversion is his distrust of the mercy of God.

Hitherto we have been speaking of the general instruction of the Church, and we shall not perhaps find a single example of any author in the Church who has taught directly the reverse; but truth demands that we explain the way in which error has been sometimes indirectly countenanced.

Among the many disadvantages arising from a rhetorical style, (in the sense at least in which that



word is understood by most people,) disadvantages, owing to which, it is often in opposition to the spirit of close reasoning and morality, one of the most common and striking, is that of exaggerating the good or evil in any thing, forgetting the relation which it may bear to others; hence the complexion of truth is either weakened or destroyed, by an endeavour to carry it too far. Such a style, which pleases many, who fancy they discern in it great powers of mind, where in fact there is nothing but weakness and an inability to embrace all the important relations of a subject; such a style, I say, has carried some away, who, through a wish to magnify some religious practice, have gone the length of attributing to it the power of ensuring to sinners their conversion at the hour of death. A false and pernicious assumption, an ill-judged flight of eloquence, mis-called popular, for that alone should be called popular which tends to enlighten and to improve the people, not to foment their passions and their prejudices. True it is, that those who sometimes gave way to these pitiable flights of exaggeration, failed not for the most part to mix some corrective with them; but this afforded no adequate remedy for the evil communicated, seeing that men (if I may use the expression) willingly devour the honey, while they reject the wholesome bitter. But be it observed of such men as these, that, besides being uniformly



contradicted by all others, they even contradicted themselves, for such language was quite incompatible with their general doctrine; and had they seriously held it, and applied it to all cases, no longer could they have preached the gospel; it would have become a dead letter. It is to be hoped that in our day, at least, such irregularities have entirely ceased.

To show the effect of "*the habit of only looking at the death of the sinner,*" the author adduces a proof which we relate in his own words: "La funeste influence de cette doctrine se fait sentir en Italie d'une manière éclatante, toutes les fois que quelque grand criminel est condamné à un supplice capital. La solennité du jugement, et la certitude de la peine, frappent toujours le plus endurci de terreur, puis de repentir. Aucun incendiaire, aucun brigand, aucun empoisonneur ne monte sur l'échafaud sans avoir fait, avec une componction profonde, une bonne confession, une bonne communion, sans faire ensuite une bonne mort; son confesseur déclare sa ferme confiance que l'âme du pénitent a déjà pris son chemin vers le ciel, et la populace se dispute au pied de l'échafaud les reliques du nouveau saint, du nouveau martyr, dont les crimes l'avoient peut-être glacée d'effroi pendant des années."

I had never even heard of this strange custom, before I read the above passage, but far from allow-

ing my own ignorance to serve as an answer to an assertion, I leave the matter to those who know the state of Italy better than I do. The fact is of so public a nature, that it will be easy to establish the truth.

I lay this down, however, as a maxim, that wheresoever such a superstition may exist, nothing was ever more repugnant to the doctrine of the Church. She receives, it is true, the criminal who is snatched by the hand of the law from the society of men, or from life: she interposes her ministry between the judge and the executioner, for there is no situation in which a soul may be sanctified or consoled, in which some natural repugnance is to be overcome, or a variety of painful feelings, leading to no temporal reward; there is, I say, no such situation that does not constitute a post of honour for the minister of the Church. In this position he places himself, and will continue to place himself, so long as those laws shall remain, that are enacted in the belief that certain crimes can only be diminished by the death of the criminal. Who can describe the anguish of that man, who, with the scaffold before his eyes, looks into his conscience, but finds only the recollection of his crimes? Of that man, who is awaiting the stroke of death, to be endured not for the cause of God, but to expiate his passions? And yet the Church was to refuse her endeavours to

render this suffering beneficial to the unhappy being, who was compelled to endure it! It was a case, in which she was to forsake a man, in which she had no mercy to promise! Ah! no, she stretches open her arms to him, for she forgets not that even for him the blood of Christ was shed, and that it should not have been shed in vain she humbly hopes. But certainty she promises neither to him nor to others, and he, who would rashly lay hold on it, presumes upon her charity to trample under foot her doctrine.

## CHAPTER X.

ON THE SUBSISTENCE OF THE CLERGY, CONSIDERED  
AS A CAUSE OF IMMORALITY.

“ Je ne parlerai point du scandaleux trafic des indulgences, et du prix honteux que le pénitent payoit pour obtenir l’absolution du prêtre ; le concile de Trente prit à tâche d’en diminuer l’abus ; cependant encore aujourd’hui le prêtre vit des péchés du peuple et de ses terreurs ; le pécheur moribond prodigue, pour payer des messes et des rosaires, l’argent qu’il a souvent rassemblé par des voies iniques ; il apaise au prix de l’or sa conscience, et il établit aux yeux du vulgaire sa réputation de piété.” Pag. 416-417.

LET us for a moment admit that the fact (which nevertheless we shall examine in the sequel) is as is stated above ; let us admit that it exists at the present moment, and in Italy, for if we extended the admission to all times and places, it would amount to an acknowledgment that the religion of Jesus Christ had only produced an increase of wickedness and superstition upon the earth ; a proposition if possible more ridiculous than impious : one which would go far beyond even that of our author, who only speaks of the effects of the Catholic Religion in Italy. Let us admit then the fact, in order to draw



from it some useful result, not an argument for declamation; let us suppose that a man were commissioned to propose a remedy for this sad state of things.

How would he begin? His first care would, doubtless, be to learn whether this custom were derived from a law, or whether it were an abuse. I know it is not the first time that this distinction has been mentioned, still it is necessary to repeat it, whenever we are unable to embrace the whole question without keeping it in view. If it be said to be the effect of a law, that law must be produced to prove it: but the assumption is impossible, and acknowledged to be false by our author, who, in accusing Italy of it, as contrasted with France and Germany, does, in fact, make the admission, that Catholics as such are not bound by it, and consequently, that it is not founded on any law of the Church. If it be said that it is an abuse, then it remains for the individual supposed no longer to bring objections against the law; but to search for the origin of the evil in its non-execution, and at once, the question assumes a totally new character. He must enquire what the obstacles are which impede the natural effects of the law, or entirely prevent them; he should seek in the law itself the means for securing its fulfilment. By admitting the fact therefore, we come to this result, that this

disorder has owed its existence in Italy to the circumstance, that the Italians are not good Catholics, and that the only way to repress it, is for them to become better Catholics, like those of France and Germany.

If it were made a general rule in civil government to abolish all laws that were not carefully obeyed, a rule would be established of the worst kind ; although, in many cases, the transgressions of a law may go far to prove that it is both useless and injurious, which are certainly two good reasons for abolishing it. But in matters of religion, such a rule would be still worse, inasmuch as the essential laws of religion are not to be estimated by their partial and temporary effects, nor do they conform to circumstances, but aim at making every thing conform to them ; they emanate from undeniable authority, and it is impossible for man to substitute any better. The ecclesiastical Ministry instituted by Jesus Christ, constitutes one of these laws, and the greatest abuse men can make of this ministry is that of destroying it as much as they can, by removing it from any country, and during any period, however short. It is not, nor ought it to be, the system of the Church to root out abuses, at whatever cost, but rather to combine the preservation of what is essential, with that extirpation or diminution of abuses which is possible ; it is not

for her to imitate the awkward and impatient workman who breaks an instrument in order to get the rust off it. Why are there abuses? Because men are led astray by their passions; and on this account it was, that Jesus Christ gave authority to the Church; on this account he instituted the ministry; and on this account the ministry is indispensable. That which above all things the Church endeavours to avoid, is the dreadful evil of a people living without Christianity, and the absurdity of Christianity existing without a ministry. It is absolutely necessary that this ministry should be supported, and there are two ways of doing it. The one would be to select the clergy, exclusively among those who are provided with fortunes; a method at once irrational and absurd; which, by restricting the holy calling to a single class of men, would entirely overthrow the beautiful order of ecclesiastical government: the other is, to ordain that the ministry itself shall afford a subsistence to him who exercises it, which is a method so reasonable, as to have constituted a law from the very foundation of Christianity; for the priest, who ministers at the altar, incapacitates himself from procuring his living elsewhere. Then the faithful ought to provide a subsistence for the minister of the altar; and this is the law of the Church. But among the clergy, who are but men, some will be found who, looking



avariciously at what is given to supply necessity, will make an unlawful use of the right to receive, by extending it to things to which it is not applicable; whilst, at the same time, there will be found some among the faithful who, very properly, deeming it a good work to provide the ministry with subsistence, assign to this work a value it does not possess, attribute to it effects which belong exclusively to other indispensable works, and are generous in their contributions in order to dispense with being Christians,—here then is the abuse. And as this abuse is contrary to the spirit and letter of the institution, the proper way to remove it is to have recourse to the institution itself. It is thus that they have always acted, to whom the power of effecting this has been directly entrusted. Ecclesiastical history is full of these endeavours, and contains numerous instances of their success: to go no farther, the example of the Council of Trent here cited, is a proof in point; many Popes and Bishops have paid the greatest attention to this duty: the great St. Charles Borromeo, spent his indefatigable life in the performance of it, and was always steadfast to the Church, nor have there ever been wanting sincere and zealous men among the Catholic clergy, who have exposed abuses and corrected them wherever they could. Finally, all the faithful may remedy them in some degree, by being



themselves pious and vigilant observers of the divine law, if they can do nothing else; for abuses always arise where men wish for them; and men always desire them, when they are corrupt; they dislike the law, and they enact one for themselves. Whoever reforms himself, contributes to the reform of the whole body to which he belongs.

We have hitherto admitted the fact, in order to prove that any one would reason falsely, who decided against religion in consequence of it: let us now proceed to examine whether the fact exists or not. "The Priest," says our author, "lives by the sins and the terrors of the people; the dying sinner lavishes the money he has acquired, too often by iniquitous means, in buying masses and rosaries; he quiets his conscience by his gold, and obtains a reputation for piety in the eyes of the vulgar."

Here I would observe that, so far as I know, retribution for rosaries was never heard of, besides which, as the recital of them is no part of any ecclesiastical ministration, if there were some retribution for them, it would not, necessarily, be confined to the priests.

But observe what is far more important, that it is not only a Catholic precept, but one universally preached and known throughout Italy, that in order to atone for the sin of having acquired money by iniquitous means, it is absolutely necessary to

restore it, as far as possible, to those who have been injured; and that to apply it to other purposes, however holy they may be, were a delusion and an obstinacy in sin. It would, perhaps, be too much to say, that no priest has ever taught any thing contrary to this; but if there be such an one, he would, unquestionably, constitute an exception no less rare than deplorable.

It is well known what restitutions are made through the instrumentality of the priesthood. "*Que de restitutions de réparations, la confession ne fait elle point faire chez les Catholiques?*" (Rousseau, *Emile*, liv. 4, not 41.) The priests forsooth induce a man to quiet his conscience by his gold; but this gold which does but pass through their hands is a witness that they do not sully the purity of religion by appropriating it to themselves, and that they teach that it can only be a means of expiation by being returned to those from whom it was unjustly obtained.

It is true that the priest who does his duty, endeavours to excite in the minds of the faithful a fear of the divine judgments; a fear from the consideration of which, owing, to our incomprehensible weakness, every thing diverts our attention; a holy fear, which calls us back to virtue; a noble fear, which represents it to be the only real misfortune to fall short of our high destination; a fear which in-

spires courage, accustoming him who feels it, to fear nothing from men. But where is the priest who, having excited this fear by his instructions, would teach that the way to salvation is to be found in liberality to the clergy? Where is the man who has heard of such an example? On the contrary, do they not all say, "wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your thoughts from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow?" (Isaiah i. 16, 17.)

Certainly it is not for me to say that avarice has not sometimes regarded even the purest, the most awful and sacred things as objects of lucre, and (if I may quote the words of an eminent bishop who trembled as he uttered them) *faire du sang adorable de Jesus Christ un profit infâme*;\* and however much the church might shudder at the idea of such a sin, she has done right to speak of it, in order to guard against it, and at least to render it difficult and rare, if not impossible. The council of Trent, after having declared the perpetual doctrine of the Church on purgatory, on the assistance that the souls detained in that state receive from the prayers of the faithful, and principally from the acceptable sacrifice of the altar, after enjoining the bishops to

\* Massillon, Discours Sinodaux, 13<sup>e</sup>, De la compassion des pauvres.



teach and maintain this doctrine, adds, "those things which have an appearance of vain curiosity and superstition, or savour of filthy lucre, we prohibit as a scandal and a stumbling-block to the faithful."\*

This is not the place for noticing these stumbling blocks, or for rebuking those who have thrown them on the path of salvation: nor indeed does such a task belong to one, who has no claim to authority in the economy of God's Church. But to deny that such things have existed, to justify them by any specious reasonings, or to represent that as necessary, to the church, which is a source of spiritual desolation and of shame, would be at once repugnant to truth and to the dictates of religion. Nor, on the other hand, can I admit that any feature in the argument has been left unnoticed in passing them over in silence, seeing that the reasons have already been stated, why it may be affirmed that though, doubtless abuses, have existed, still so execrable an one as

\* Cum Catholica Ecclesia Spiritu Sancto edocta ex sacris literis, et antiqua Patrum traditione, in sacris Conciliis, et novissime in hac œcumenica Synodo docuerit Purgatorium esse, animasque ibi detentas fidelium suffragiis, potissimum vero acceptabili altaris Sacrificio juvari; præcipit Sancta Synodus Episcopis, ut sanam de Purgatorio doctrinam a Sanctis Patribus, et a sacris Conciliis traditam a Christi fidelibus credi, teneri, doceri, et ubique prædicari diligenter studeant. — Ea vero quæ ad curiositatem quamdam aut superstitionem spectant, vel turpe lucrum sapiunt, tamquam scandala, et fidelium offendicula prohibeant. Conc. Trid. sess. xxv. Decret. de Purgatorio.



that of substituting donations for duties, and of quieting the conscience at the price of gold, is an abuse that never did possess an existence.

On the contrary, the Church has ever spoken her mind by means of her councils, her popes, and her bishops: one example of zeal and sincerity, among a thousand others, may be found in the synodal discourses of the bishop we have just quoted, of that Massillon, who was doubtless one of the brightest lights that ever shone on earth for the instruction of the human race, and whose eloquence is perhaps unequalled.\* The most violent and subtle enemy of the Church could never represent the horrible effects of avarice, when it has entered the heart of a minister of the sanctuary, with more vehemence or point; nor could any son of the Church, however docile and tender he might be, deplore them with deeper sorrow and humility, or a livelier desire to see such a deformity removed.

But we at least do not believe it so easy a matter to possess this spirit of impartiality, for in judging of the failings of priests, we are but too apt to yield to those unhappy prejudices which arise from a feeling, which is alas! too general, of aversion for their holy ministry. They, who point out to us the narrow path of salvation, who combat our inclinations,

\* Besides the former discourse, see the 9th, *De l'avarice des prêtres*.

and who, by their very habit, remind us that there is a Judge, whose ministers they are, that there is a ministry to bind and to loose, and that there is an example they are appointed to hold forth to our imitation; alas! they present an occasion too tempting for our corrupt senses to suffer it to escape; the aversion of flesh and blood for the law is too deep-rooted not to extend itself to those who preach obedience to it, while it suggests the insinuation that they at least follow it not, and have, therefore, the less right to oblige us to do so, who learn it from them. It is this aversion which in part leads us to blame them all for a fault that is confined to a very few, which urges us to say, that nothing would be more worthy of our respect than the ministry of the Church, if only there were any who discharged the office worthily, while we shut our eyes to any individual who is presented to our view as one that does discharge it worthily, or we misrepresent the virtues, the existence of which we cannot deny. Hence, if the zealous conduct of a priest, whose voluntary poverty and generosity are too evident, forbids the suspicion of avarice, he will at least be accused of wishing to rule men, to direct or influence them, and thus to secure honour. If his conduct be so far removed from intrigues, so candid and so simple as to rebut this insinuation, he is at least a restless fanatic, or an intolerant zealot. If his conduct

breathe nothing but love, tranquillity and patience, it is attributed to prejudice, to littleness of mind, or an unenlightened judgment; admirable reasons by which the world accounts for the very perfection of all virtue, and for the brightest triumph of the reasoning power of man.

Yes! there are priests, who despise those riches, of which they announce the vanity and the danger; priests who would blush to receive a gift from the poor man, but would defraud themselves to succour him in his need; who receive from the rich with a noble modesty and an inward feeling of repugnance, who when they stretch out their hand, console themselves only with the thought that they shall soon open it again to distribute among the poor that money, which in their eyes is far from compensating a ministry that can have no adequate reward but in the love of their God. They pass through the world, and hear its jests on the covetousness of the priests, they hear them, and they could lift up their voice and show their pure hands, and a heart only anxious for those treasures which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt (Matt. vi. 20); covetous only of the salvation of their brethren; but they forbear, they are silent, they devour with eager joy, the scornful insults of the world, exulting that they are counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. (Acts v. 41.)

## CHAPTER XI.

## ON INDULGENCES.

“ Mais l'on a considéré les indulgences gratuites,  
 “ celles que d'après les concessions des papes on obti-  
 “ ent par quelque acte extérieur de piété, comme moins  
 “ abusives ; on ne sauroit toutefois en concilier l'exis-  
 “ tence avec aucun principe de moralité. Lorsqu'on  
 “ voit, par exemple, deux cents jours d'indulgence  
 “ promis pour chaque baiser donné à la croix qui s'élève  
 “ au milieu du Colysée, lorsqu'on voit dans toutes les  
 “ églises d'Italie tant d'indulgences plénières si faciles  
 “ à gagner, comment concilier ou la justice de Dieu ou  
 “ sa miséricorde, avec le pardon accordé à une si foible  
 “ pénitence, ou avec le châtiment réservé à celui qui  
 “ n'est point à portée de le gagner, par cette voie si  
 “ facile ?” Pag. 417.

THESE four questions naturally suggest themselves.

1. What is an indulgence ?
2. Can there be an excess in the granting of indulgences ?
3. Does any such excess in the granting of them, operate against the principles of morality ?
4. If it does not produce this effect, what effect does it produce ?

As it would be impossible to throw any new light



on a discussion that has for ages occupied the attention of innumerable writers, no less than to invest so dry a subject with any agreeable charm, we will endeavour to make up for these deficiencies by the brevity and the conciseness of our reasoning, trusting for attention to the candour of those readers who are never otherwise than pleased by what can have even the smallest tendency to advance the cause of truth.

1. What is an indulgence ?

For brevity's sake, I will take the definition from the catechism of the diocese of Milan, one which agrees with those of all other parts of the Catholic world : " An indulgence is the remission of that temporal punishment which generally remains due to the divine justice, either in *this* or the *future* life, after the guilt and the eternal punishment of sin have been remitted."\*

It is evident, then, that this doctrine supposes in the sinner an obligation to satisfy divine justice.

2. Can there be an excess in the granting of indulgences ? Undoubtedly, there may be : hence the Councils of Lateran and Trent have spoken of this excess, and have either ordered or advised remedies.

A consequence here presents itself, no less singular

\* " L' indulgenza è una remissione di quella pena temporale, la quale per lo più resta da scontarsi, in questa o nell' altra vita, alla divina giustizia dopo rimessa la colpa e la pena eterna." (1) Compendio della dottrina cristiana cavata dal catechismo Romano ec. Milano 1814, pag. 120.

than true; every complaint against the excess in granting indulgences is in fact an act of homage to the Catholic doctrine of satisfaction. Because an indulgence being a commutation of punishment and a diminution of satisfactory works, whoever regards the diminution as excessive, declares in plain terms that the satisfaction is just and useful, while he admits that if we take away satisfaction altogether, we should be carrying the principle of an indulgence to the utmost possible length, thus changing an excess that has sometimes been committed in practice into a rule of action, converting a passing abuse into a perpetual law, and at once depriving it of all those correctives which an abuse necessarily carries with it, inasmuch as abuses seldom openly and directly strike at the letter of the law.

3. Does the excess in the granting of indulgences operate against the principles of morality?

No never: "The regulations established in the dispensation of indulgences," says Bossuet, "was a point of discipline." This being granted, an excess in the granting of indulgences is evidently an abuse: but the Catholic Church is so constituted, that an abuse cannot affect the principles of morality, because these are not matters of discipline, but of faith. Every essential principle of morality being an article of faith, they can only be destroyed by a doctrine that establishes a contrary principle. Let us now

examine the matter, and we shall find that the principles of morality remain untouched, even though there be the greatest possible excess in the granting of indulgences.

There are two essential maxims which we must mention, one in the words of Massillon, and the other in those of Bossuet; not because they are the only authors that inculcate them, for all others do the same, nor is there a single dissentient voice, but that we may not lose an opportunity of conveying such an important idea, especially when expressed with such accuracy and elegance.

Ne nous flattons point que nos fautes soient expiées, si elles n'ont pas été détestées; ne croyons pas que les grâces de l'Eglise nous aient purifiés, si elles ne nous ont pas changés; ne comptons sur son indulgence qu'autant que nous pouvons compter sur un sincère repentir.\*

The conversion of the heart, then, is a necessary disposition for the gaining of an indulgence.

Mais il se faut bien garder de s'imaginer que l'intention de l'Eglise soit de nous décharger par l'indulgence de l'obligation de satisfaire à Dieu: au contraire, l'esprit de l'Eglise est de n'accorder l'indulgence qu'à ceux qui se mettent en devoir de satisfaire de leur côté à la justice divine, autant que

\* Massillon, Mandement pour la publication du Jubilé, 15 Nov. 1724.



l'infirmité humaine le permet : et l'indulgence ne laisse pas de nous être fort nécessaire en cet état, puisqu'ayant, comme nous avons, tout sujet de croire que nous sommes bien éloignés d'avoir satisfait selon nos obligations, nous serions trop ennemis de nous-mêmes, si nous n'avions recours aux grâces et à l'indulgence de l'Eglise.\*

In order, therefore, to gain an indulgence, it is necessary that we be disposed to satisfy the Divine Justice as far as human infirmity permits, which disposition cannot be sincere unless accompanied by a life of penitence.

These two dispositions presumed; the most ample indulgence attached to the most trivial work is in perfect accordance with all the principles of morality; because the justice of God is not outraged by the remission of punishment obtained on such conditions. To controvert the notions we have of this justice, it would be necessary to say that indulgences obtain the remission of punishment without the conversion of the heart and a desire to satisfy, but such an impiety as this, thank heaven, is not taught by any one in the Church.

*But, you will object, how are we to reconcile the mercy of God with the chastisement reserved for those who are not in a situation to obtain pardon by adopting such easy means ?*

\* Bossuet, instructions nécessaires pour le Jubilé. Art. 1.



Here be it observed, that it is almost impossible to find a case in which a member of the Church is deprived of all means of recourse to the indulgences of the Church. But even supposing such a case, the Church is far from saying that punishment is reserved for such an individual: she dispenses the ordinary means of mercy, which God has entrusted to her, but she pretends not to circumscribe or to measure his infinite mercy: she never asserts that “*Quei che leva e quando e cui gli piace.*”—“He, who lifteth up both when and whom he will,”\* cannot grant pardon to an earnest desire to obtain it by means of the Church, even though every avenue to obtaining it through this direct means be closed.

4. If an excess in the granting of an indulgence does not operate in violation of the principles of morality, what effect does it produce?

An injurious effect doubtless, like all other excesses, and we need not fatigue ourselves by searching for it, seeing that we are told by the Council of Trent that its effect is to enervate discipline. “The holy synod ..... desires that moderation should be used in granting indulgences, according to the ancient and approved custom of the Church, lest by too great condescension ecclesiastical discipline should be enervated.”†

\* Dante. *Purgatorio* Canto II. v. 95.

† *Sacrosancta Synodus.*.. in his (indulgentiis) tamen concedendis moderationem, juxta veterem et probatam in Ecclesia

In fact, if an indulgence affords facilities for the fulfilment of the duty of satisfaction, the excess of it would amount almost to a total exoneration from this obligation; and the same merciful reason for which God has imposed satisfaction on us, affords a motive for moderation in the granting of indulgences, “de peur,” says Bossuet, “que sortant trop promptement des liens de la justice, nous ne nous abandonnions à une téméraire confiance, abusant de la facilité du pardon.” *Exposition de la Doctrine de l’Eglise*, § viii.

But is this supposed excess to be found in the examples quoted by our author? To answer this question is not my business, nor is the answer of the least importance, seeing that it has been already explained how the principle of an indulgence is to be reconciled with the principles of morality, which was the case in point.

*consuetudinem, adhiberi cupit; ne nimia facilitate ecclesiastica disciplina enervetur. Sess. xxv. Decr. de Indulg.*

## CHAPTER XII.

ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT DECIDE OUR  
SALVATION OR DAMNATION.

“ Le pouvoir attribué au repentir, aux cérémonies religieuses, aux indulgences, tout s'étoit réuni pour persuader au peuple que le salut ou la damnation éternelle dépendoient de l'absolution du prêtre, et ce fut encore peut-être là le coup le plus funeste porté à la morale. Le hasard, et non plus la vertu, fut appelé à décider du sort éternel de l'âme du moribond. L'homme le plus vertueux, celui dont la vie avoit été la plus pure, pouvoit être frappé de mort subite, au moment où la colère, la douleur, la surprise, lui avoient arraché un de ces mots profanes, que l'habitude a rendus si communs, et que d'après les décisions de l'Eglise, on ne peut prononcer sans tomber en péché mortel ; alors sa damnation étoit éternelle, parce qu'un prêtre ne s'étoit pas trouvé présent pour accepter sa pénitence, et lui ouvrir les portes du ciel. L'homme le plus pervers, le plus souillé de crimes, pouvoit au contraire éprouver un de ces retours momentanés à la vertu, qui ne sont pas étrangers aux cœurs les plus dépravés ; il pouvoit faire une bonne confession, une bonne communion, une bonne mort, et être assuré du paradis.” Page 417, 418.

THESE objections are principally directed against the doctrine we have defended in the 9th chapter, to

which, we refer our readers here. Here we shall only discuss certain suppositions. The erroneous opinion that eternal salvation or damnation depends on the absolution of a priest, is one unknown in Italy. There it is held that salvation depends on the mercy of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, applied to the soul that has either preserved her baptismal innocence, or recovered it by penance. The authority of the priest to absolve from sin, is so clearly founded on the words of the gospel, that the mere quotation of them is evidence sufficient: "whose sins ye shall forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins ye shall retain they are retained." (John xx. 23.) But no one has ever understood that salvation is so dependent on absolution that it cannot be hoped for the man, who has it not in his power to receive this distinguished blessing. Besides that it is possible for a man to preserve, throughout his whole life, his baptismal innocence, by not falling into any mortal sin that would deprive him of the grace of God, (and although the world discerns them not, those just souls have not ceased who pass through it uncontaminated by its customs and vices,) besides all this it is the express doctrine of the Church and the faith of all Catholics, that the repentance of him, who is unable to receive absolution, but who heartily desires it, and is truly contrite, will be accepted by God.



When God gave his ministers power to absolve from sin, can we imagine that it was ever his design to make pardon impossible in certain cases? Or were the gifts he bestowed upon his Church to lessen his omnipotence and his mercy? Or because he had vouchsafed to make an instrument of the hand of man, was his own arm shortened that it could not save\* those whom he had converted to himself?

Even had this false persuasion existed, it was doubtless not to be traced to the first or third of those causes here adduced. Not to the power *attributed to repentance*, because this power would render absolution less necessary to a soul already returned to God, nor to the *power attributed to indulgences*, for no one ever thought that they could remit the pain of eternal damnation. As to *religious ceremonies*, I say nothing about them, as I do not exactly know what are here alluded to.

The Church is so far from surmising that the eternal lot of a dying man can ever be decided by chance, and not by his moral conduct, that she is not even acquainted with the term *chance* (*hazard*.) She does not speak of a man being in a state of grace or not *by chance*, nor of dying at one moment rather than another by chance. If a virtuous man falls into grievous sin, it is not the effect of chance but of his own perverted will; if he dies in sin, it is a just but terrible judgment.

\* Isaiah lix. 1.

The Church does not suppose any mortal sin to be compatible with the preservation of virtue, therefore, if the just man becomes a sinner, it is his moral conduct, that is his having abandoned virtue, that determines the fate of his soul. "The justice of the just man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression." (Ezekiel xxxiii. 12.)

But it neither gives a just idea of the true spirit of the Church, nor of the nature of man, in my opinion at least, to suppose that he can fall so easily from a state of virtue, once truly possessed, or to believe that the natural consequence of the *purest life* could possibly be an impenitent death and eternal damnation. True it is, the just man may fall, and the Church reminds him of this awful truth, in order that he may watch and be humble, that he may hope and fear. If he were not liable to fall, how could his life be considered one of trial? If he were invincible, of what use would it be to appoint a combat? If he were not every moment in need of divine aid, wherefore should he pray? It is the object of the Church to remove presumption from the just man, not faith; and it is impossible that she, who only speaks to sinners of conversion and pardon, of repentance and of consolation, who reminds them of the happiness to be enjoyed in their Father's house, should ever harass the innocent by representing their state, as one

without firmness and support. The Church not only counsels hope, but she requires it. She exhorts all men "to work out their salvation with fear and trembling," (Phillip. ii. 12.) but she announces, at the same time, that "God is faithful, who will not suffer a man to be tempted above that he is able," (1 Cor. x. 13) whilst she never ceases to repeat to the just, "he, who hath begun the good work in you, will perfect it even unto the day of Jesus Christ. (Philipp. i. 6.)

I do not here cite those supposed decisions of the Church, that a man '*falls into a mortal sin by uttering certain profane words which custom has made common,*' because I am unacquainted with them; and it would be necessary to know them, in order to enter into a discussion upon them. The Church is so circumspect in her distinction of sins, her language is so guarded, that it would be a most interesting point to observe how she would descend to these particulars, and treat them with the authority and dignity that became her. At all events, the just child of the Church, nourished, as he is, by holy and exalted thoughts of a future life, accustomed to conquer the assaults of his sensual appetites, and bent on regulating every action by reason and prudence, in the language of the inspired volume, "keeps a guard on his lips." (Ps. cxli. 3.) During the moments of calm, and in

the silence of his passions, he fortifies his soul against the movements of anger and of sadness he prays that he may be always on his guard, so as never to be taken by surprise; if he falls, it becomes a motive for humiliation, for fresh and more earnest prayer. But I am at a loss to conceive that any one can teach, that a single profane word would destroy the reign of God in a soul; though it is certain, that wherever God reigns, the tongue is pure and well regulated, and the Church is far from teaching her children to follow the customs of the world, or to acquire a habit of uttering vulgar and violent expressions, destitute at once of wisdom, of meaning, and of dignity.

As to the '*momentary return of the wicked man to virtue*,' I have already said enough, and, perhaps, too much in my ninth chapter.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## ON THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

“ Ce ne fut pas tout : l'Eglise plaça ses commandemens à côté de la grande table des vertus et des vices, dont la connoissance a été implantée dans notre cœur. Elle ne les appuya point par une sanction aussi redoutable que ceux de la divinité, elle ne fit point dépendre le salut éternel de leur observation ; et en même temps elle leur donna une puissance que ne purent jamais obtenir les lois de la morale. Le meurtrier encore tout couvert du sang qu'il vient de verser, fait maigre avec dévotion, tout en méditant un nouvel assassinat... car plus chaque homme vicieux a été régulier à observer les commandemens de l'Eglise, plus il se sent dans son cœur dispensé de l'observation de cette morale céleste, à laquelle il faudroit sacrifier ses penchans dépravés.”  
Page 419.

LET us first examine the two preliminary assertions, we will then speak of the relation of the ecclesiastical precepts with the laws of morality.\*

\* It is evident our author does not intend to speak precisely of those which, in the strict sense, and in catechetical language, are termed ‘ *the Commandments of the Church*,’ but rather, under a more comprehensive view of the practices ordered or sanctioned by her, and it is in this sense that we also shall take them.

1. The Church professes to give no precept that does not ordain an action which is virtuous in itself, or is else a means of purifying, sanctifying, and elevating the soul; in a word, of facilitating the fulfilment of the divine law. If this be denied, let the vicious or indifferent precepts of the Church be adduced: if it be conceded, how ridiculous it is to talk of her having “*placed her commandments side by side with the great table of virtues and vices,*” seeing that she has put them in their proper place.

Moreover, the assertion that the knowledge of virtue and vice, is naturally imprinted in our hearts, is not to be taken for granted, but forms a question to be discussed here, if it had not already been treated in a foregoing chapter.

2. It is not true to assert that the Church has not given to her own commandments the same sanction as that which accompanies the commandments of God, for they also come from God, and she would distrust the authority given to her by her Divine Founder, if she acted otherwise. “*He that heareth not the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* (Matt. xviii. 17.) Not only so, but she does make salvation dependent on the observance of her commands; because the transgression of them, can only proceed from a heart that is obstinate and careless of that true life

which is only given to him who sighs after it, who values it, and who seeks after it in the way appointed by Jesus Christ. This is her perpetual doctrine, so manifest and so universal, that every Catholic can attest the fact.

But the essential point we have to examine is, the effect attributed to these commandments, which, it is pretended, are a kind of horrible substitute for the eternal laws of morality, and an excuse for disobeying them without remorse; this is the point of view, and the only one, in which they are considered in the passage quoted at the head of this chapter. And here two objects present themselves for our consideration: the fact itself, and its dependence on the essential principles of the Church.

The fact is a most important part of moral statistics. And here I shall endeavour to point out, what appear to me, the maxims that should be kept in view, and the enquiries that should be made, in order to come to a knowledge of it.

That religion commands only what is holy, is a proposition which, I think, no one will call in question; hence, a sincere and entire fulfilment of the dictates of religion is incompatible with any crime; and as the man who is determined to be vicious cannot reconcile his actions with religion, as it is, he either forsakes it altogether, or tries to alter it; he becomes either impious or superstitious.



In the former case, his hatred to the precepts, he is unwilling to observe, leads him to wish they were mere human fictions, and his remorse at having violated them, will sometimes even change this desire into a conviction.

But there is another species of error into which he may fall: he perceives that crime excludes him from the portion of the just, still he cannot cease to believe in the promise, and he is unwilling to renounce it: he endeavours to forget that '*whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all:*' (James ii. 10.) he would fain be faithful to those portions of it, which do not require the sacrifice of his darling sin. He knows that it is an act of duty to obey certain commandments, and by doing so, he flatters himself that he will not be quite out of the path of duty, and that he may still keep one foot in the way of salvation; he thinks he is not quite forsaken by God, seeing he still observes some little that God commands. And the darkness of his mind may be so excessive, as to lead him to fancy that such acts as these, unaccompanied though they be, by the love of justice, are a sort of expiation, (for where will a mind stop that is a slave to the passions?) and he will mistake for religious feeling, what is nothing more than the delirium of impiety.

Now, in order to decide whether a downright



contempt for religion, or such a superstition as this, be the more common error of Italian criminals, it is no difficult task to conceive what enquiries ought to be made; to visit the prisons, to enquire of their inmates, sentenced to those dungeons for black offences, whether they cherish feelings of respect for the Church, or speak of her with derision; to demand of those, whose duty it is to question and examine them; to enquire of the parish priests, (though you will suspect them, forsooth, of partiality) if those who gave themselves up to vice were distinguished by the observance of the precepts of the Church; in short, to take the most accurate information. As it is not in my power to do all this, I can only advance an opinion, which is founded, I confess, on the tendency we all have to form a general judgment on facts that have a relation to it, even though the instances be not sufficiently numerous or certain to enable us to demonstrate its truth to others. If my opinion, then, be asked, it is this, that amongst those of my countrymen who have fallen into an unhappy career of crime, but little will you now find of superstition, too much of absolute carelessness about every thing connected with religion. Nor would it suffice to induce me to abandon this opinion, to urge that our author has advanced one totally opposite to it, seeing that, whatever be the weight of his autho-

rity, a decision, on an assemblage of facts, cannot be admitted but after many proofs and much reasoning. I am but too well aware, that many foreigners view Italy with an evil eye, and receive with avidity every thing that can be urged to prove the superstition of my country, without stopping to make a single enquiry; but I am not so persuaded of the justice or wisdom of such conduct.

Without, therefore, claiming any superior power for my own judgment, I submit my opinion to the candid examination of those who are capable of enquiring and of sifting into the matter.

Although the object of this work is not the defence of Italy, but that of religion, still, I cannot but protest against the interpretation that may be given to the instance adduced by our author, by those foreigners who are accustomed to believe even worse than what they have been told of this much calumniated country; and who, when they hear of assassins observing the abstinences of the Church, fill their heads with the notion, that Italy is inhabited by a race of men, something between the robber and the monk. Should any accident throw this little work into the hands of such an one, it is for him to say, whether it be asking too much to request that he would make some further enquiry before he forms such an opinion of a nation.

But to come to the connection of such facts as

these with the principles of the Church; the impression, which for the honour and truth of religion it is most important to remove, is that which may arise against the spirit and precepts of the Church, from seeing these precepts represented as opposed to the laws of morality, from seeing abstinence placed hand in hand with murder, and (in other passages which I have not thought it necessary to quote,) devotion towards sacred images, with libertinism, an observance of the fasts of the Church, with perjury, as if these things were, in a manner, cause and effect; for it is pretended that the degree of wickedness is, I might say, in progressive ratio to the degree of fidelity to the precepts of the Church. Monstrous assumption! which it is almost degrading to notice; for where is the connection between these two things? the ideas, as well as the names, are repugnant to each other; there is no point where they agree, the distance between them is that between good and evil. No, never has the Church pretended to substitute her laws for those of morality, nor is it possible to conceive any precepts more in conformity with all the perfect and eternal principles of morality; nor would it be ought but the raving of impiety, for a Christian to imagine himself excused from them by the exterior observance of any of these precepts; a delirium this, so extravagant, that we may almost question its existence.



It is one thing to admit that wicked men have maintained an external fidelity to the commands given by the Church to facilitate the fulfilment of all justice, while, at the same time, they trampled under foot those more weighty commandments on which the preservation of society depends; and it is quite another to assert that this fidelity has encouraged them to trample the latter under foot. They have observed, indeed, the easier part of the law, they have only committed those sins which they could not refuse to their corrupt inclinations; they have not added a contempt for all the precepts of religion to the violation of some of them, for this contempt offered them not a sufficient inducement to commit the sin; this is precisely the clue to their state of mind. But even supposing there were *the wicked and vicious individual, who felt himself exempted from the rules of morality, in proportion to his regularity in observing the commandments of the Church*, it would still remain to be proved, what support could be found for such a system, in the maxims and precepts of the Church; it would still be necessary to show the point from whence he started, in order to arrive at such a delusion, to declare what institutions could keep in order a mind and heart like those which such an individual is supposed to possess. Talk of the devotion with which an assassin abstains from meat! Devotion indeed! Alas! such a feeling,



combining, as it does, self-denial with love, is immeasurably distant from the heart of him, who has resolved the death of a brother! But, oh! he keeps abstinence! and what then? Has the Church in commanding him to be temperate, to abstain from flesh on certain days, to overcome his appetites and to mortify his unruly body, ever given him any sanction for the commission of murder? Or was the Church to abstain from commanding all men to keep a bridle on gluttony, because there are some brutal enough to commit murder? Was she to impose no more penance, for fear of encouraging sin? What evil can result from having two different commandments, so long as they do not contradict each other? It is impossible to imagine any system of morality, or rule of life, in which there will not be obligations of various kinds and different importance: perfect morality is that in which every obligation is derived from one principle, and each directed to one common end, and that a most holy one. Such is the morality of the Church, nor can any such be found elsewhere.

Is it then, I ask, to be believed that the Church has never obtained this result, this holy end? In the passage we are controverting, mention is made but of one of the many possible relations between her precepts and general morality, the fulfilment of them, combined with a perseverance in crime.

But is it just that a code of discipline instituted, enforced, and revered by such an illustrious society as the Catholic Church, should receive no attention, but as it is obeyed by some murderer, some prostitute, some perjurer? Can it be denied that virtuous Catholics are observers of the Church's precepts? and if so, is it possible that such observance should have no influence on their conduct? Oh! no, we are told that an honourable obedience can never be in conformity with reason, nor the love of the rule which would make us prefer what is prescribed, to what we should rather choose, nor abstinence, which frees the soul from sensual inclinations, nor the veneration of devout images, lifting the mind up as it does to heavenly things, prevailing from that very power which the senses possess to turn it to evil, nor the habit of worshipping God, of vigilance, and of self-denial, nor in fact, any of the effects the legislator had in view: oh! no, all this was a result that never could be obtained! Neither was it possible for any Catholic to become more *faithful to that celestial morality to which our corrupt propensities ought to be sacrificed*, in proportion to his regularity in observing the commands of the Church. But the world itself bears witness that there have been such, if in no other way, by laughing at their scruples: yes, the world, that affects to pity them as much for their fear of injuring others by word or

deed, and of omitting the least work of charity, as for their fear of tasting a forbidden food.

Would there be less crime by abolishing the commandments of the Church? No: but there would be fewer religious sentiments, fewer works independent of temporal impulses and ends, fewer works directed to the state of perfection for which man was created, that state which will be fully developed in a future life, but which every one is required to aim at in this. History is filled with the notice of bad men, who were far from obeying these precepts, or performing any acts of piety. When examples are found of a wicked life mingled with religious practices, dictated by a certain feeling, I know not what, and not by any human motive, writers immediately seize hold of them; nor are they perhaps out of order in so doing, seeing that the union of things so contrary as wickedness and Christian observances, and the continuance of a certain respect towards a religion which never commanded ought but what was good in that heart which makes choice of evil, is but too striking a fact for observation, as a melancholy phenomenon of human nature. Louis XI., as we are informed\* by Bossuet, honoured, even to superstition, an image of our Lady. Who is there that is ignorant of the fact? But if Louis XI., not content through the rage of ambition with violating

\* *Abrégé de l'Histoire de France*, liv. xii. année 1472.



so many divine and ecclesiastical laws of humanity, of justice and of truth, had transgressed every other law, because it was merely commanded by the Church, are we to believe that he would have been the better for that? Would he have abandoned an encouragement to evil, or would he have lost the only remaining restraint? Would he not, perhaps, by so doing have banished from his heart some lingering sentiment of pity, of humility, and of brotherly love? It is believed by some historians that he poisoned the Duke of Guyenne, his own brother, and it is said that he was heard to beg pardon for the crime before a little image of the Blessed Virgin: but what does this prove, but that the sight of a holy image was capable of awakening remorse even in him; that even he at that moment found himself transported to the contemplation of an order of things in which ambition, reasons of state, the preservation of one's personal safety, or even the reception of injuries, afforded no justification for crime; that in the presence of that Virgin, whose very name calls forth every sentiment the most tender and the most exalted, even he could feel what it was to be the murderer of a brother.

But even supposing the isolated case of a murderer, who observes the abstinences of the Church, the conclusion would be, that he is a man who even yet hopes for mercy, who has still some sentiment



of mercy in his heart; and oh! is not a remnant, however slight, of the fear of divine judgments some opening for repentance; is it not a remembrance of virtue and of Christianity? There are moments, when the guilty criminal reflects that there is a God, who rewards, and who punishes; and if he spare a suppliant, if he makes some cessation in his crimes, if above all he ever return to a course of virtue, is it not to such reflections as these that his conversion must be ascribed?

It is here necessary that we answer an objection. It is urged that in the instructions of Catholic pastors, we frequently meet with passages of complaint and rebuke, uttered against a certain superstition that would make men trust to the fulfilment of certain precepts, or to the use of certain pious practices as a substitute for other essential duties; that therefore the evil does in fact exist, and is even common.

In order to perceive the great difference between the evil complained of, and that of which we have hitherto spoken, it is necessary to draw a distinction between two degrees, or rather between two kinds of goodness; *viz.* that which satisfies the world, and that which is required by the gospel, and which is inculcated by its ministers. The world, for the sake of its own welfare and tranquillity, requires that men should abstain from crime, (though it still refuses to withhold its approbation from such as are

serviceable to its interests,) and that they should practise the virtues that are for the temporal good of others; the gospel not only aims at this, it requires the heart also: "Ce ne sont pas les désordres évités qui font les chrétiens, ce sont les vertus de l'Evangile pratiquées; ce ne sont pas des mœurs irréprochables aux yeux des hommes, c'est l'esprit de Jésus-Christ crucifié."<sup>\*</sup>

It is against the absence of this spirit that we so often hear Catholic priests declaim, against the vain persuasion, that it may be supplied by the externals of religion; that a man living according to the maxims of the world, forgetting, or indifferent about the supernatural motive that ought to animate all the actions of a Christian, should still have a right to believe that he can lay claim to this blessed name by the simple fulfilment of certain precepts, which possesses no value but in so far as it proceeds from the heart. But those to whom this advice is directed, are men of whom the world need not complain; they are the best of its children; and if the Church be not satisfied with them, it is because she aims at a degree of holiness of which the world knows nothing; and because, having no other interest than the salvation of mankind, she requires those virtues which elevate those

\* Massillon, Sermon du Jeudi de la 2<sup>e</sup> semaine de Carême le mauvais riche.

who exercise them, not merely those which are useful to him who inculcates them. It is not enough for the Church, that men refrain from killing each other ; she requires, that they cherish a fraternal love for one another ; that they love one another in Jesus Christ. In her estimation, nothing can supply the want of this feeling ; and every act of worship that proceeds from a heart which does not cultivate it, is in her eyes no better than superstition and deceit. But as for a superstition that would reconcile murder and perjury with an obedience to the precepts of the Church, I will venture to assert that it is a monster so entirely ideal, that there is no need of contending against it.

But supposing even that such an example were to be met with, what useful reflections should it suggest ? What ought to be the feeling with which we should regard the precepts of the Church, if even we saw them scrupulously observed by the most abandoned men ? To this question we may reply with confidence, seeing that He who cannot err has already provided the words for our purpose : “ Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye pay tithe of meat, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.”

Thus spoke the Son of God ; and what a contrast between the importance of the precepts trans-

gressed, and those obeyed ! Yet we see what was the advice he gave to those deluded men. He does not undervalue the lesser command, or even the scrupulous fulfilment of it,\* although he puts it in comparison with the most weighty precepts of the law ; nay, even that the consideration of judgment, mercy, and faith, may not suppose a disregard of the former ; and that it may be evident that the sin consists in the transgression of the latter, not in the observance of the former ; that whatever is commanded is holy, and that whatever is pious is also useful, He adds : “ These it behoved you to do, but not to leave the other undone.”†

\* The law did not command the payment of tithe of the smaller herbs. Archbishop Martini's note on the above passage.

† Matthew xxiii. 23.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## OF DETRACTION.

“ La morale proprement dite n’a cependant jamais cessé d’être l’objet des prédications de l’Eglise ; mais l’intérêt sacerdotal a corrompu dans l’Italie moderne tout ce qu’il a touché. La bienveillance mutuelle est le fondement des vertus sociales ; le casuiste la réduisant en précepte, a déclaré qu’on péchoit en disant du mal de son prochain ; il a empêché chacun d’exprimer le juste jugement qui doit discerner la vertu du vice, il a imposé silence aux accens de la vérité ; mais en accoutumant ainsi à ce que les mots n’exprimassent point la pensée, il n’a fait que redoubler la secrète défiance de chaque homme à l’égard de tous les autres.” P. 419, 420.

THE doctrine that forbids us to speak evil of our neighbour, is so manifestly the doctrine of the Church, that the casuists, who have professed it, may safely throw the whole responsibility of it upon her. If, then, the Church be interrogated for the reasons that have induced her to make it a precept, her reply will be, that it is not she who has made it a precept : that it is God who has given it

to her : that besides its intimate connection with the whole teaching of the gospel, this precept is frequently intimated in the most express terms in both the Old and New Testaments. Let one example suffice, for brevity's sake : " Be not deceived . . . . those who speak evil shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.) But has this sentence need of justification ? or is there any one who would wish to substitute a contrary one for it ?

A charge is here brought against it, that *it has prevented men from expressing that just judgment which should distinguish virtue from vice ; thus imposing silence on the voice of truth, and increasing the motives of distrust between man and man.* But our author surely does not wish that a question so complex and intricate should be looked at only in one point of view. Even though a precept were an obstacle to some good, it would be but fair to weigh all its effects, and to compare them with the evil it prevents ; for it would be very singular if a prohibition, the object of which is to make men spare each other, were only an obstacle to what is useful.

Are the love of truth, and the desire to form a correct judgment between virtue and vice, the usual and the principal motives that urge us to speak evil of our neighbour ? And are the ordinary

effects of so doing, to bring truth to light, to secure honour to virtue, and detestation to vice? A single glance at society is sufficient to convince us of the contrary, while it exhibits the true motives, the real character, and the common effects of detraction.

How is it, that in the idle conversations of the world, when the vanity of each, who would occupy others with himself, finds an obstacle to his object in the vanity of all the rest, who are aiming at the same thing, endeavouring, as they do, by every secret twist and turn, sometimes even without disguise, to attract that attention which is so rarely granted: how is it, I pray, that such success attends the man, the point of whose conversation is turned to the detraction of his neighbour, if it be not that so many passions sigh for relief from such discourse? And what passions!

Passions, such as pride, which whispers our own superiority while we behold the degradation of others; which reconciles us to our own defects, suggesting that others have the same, or even worse! Miserable condition of man! eager after perfection, he refuses the assistance proffered by religion, to assist his advance towards that absolute perfection for which he was created, whilst he wearies himself for the attainment of one that is but comparative: he pants not to be a good man, but



to be good only when compared with the evil; his aim is to compare his speed with others, not to reach the goal. Passions, such as envy, which is inseparable from pride; envy, which rejoices at evil as charity rejoices at good; envy, which breathes more freely when a fair reputation is tarnished, and when it is proved that there is some virtue or some talent wanting. Passions, such as hatred, which makes us so ready to believe evil; such as interest, that makes us dislike competitors: these, and such as these, may be numbered amongst the passions which naturally dispose us to the hearing and the uttering of detraction, which partly explain the brutal pleasure a man has in ridiculing and condemning others, and the facility with which he convinces himself of the existence of evil, while he refuses to admit the existence of a good action or of an upright intention, without a rigid inquiry. It is not surprising that religion will have nothing to do with such passions as these, or with that which puts them in operation; or how should materials so vile, and so incapable of any combination, enter into that structure of love and of humility, of worship and of reason, that she desired to erect in the hearts of all men?

There is in detraction a character of meanness, which renders it a sort of secret accusation, and even in this point of view forms a striking contrast with



the spirit of the gospel, which is all candour and dignity; which abhors all the secret ways by which a man inflicts an injury without exposing himself to view, while in those combats that are necessary for the defence of justice, she enjoins as much as possible a conduct which is the dictate of a courageous spirit. He who censures the absent, does so, for the most part, without any personal risk; he declares war against one who cannot defend himself, while he stoops to flatter, in a manner more degrading than ingenious, the man who listens to him. *Thou shalt not curse the deaf man*, (Levit. xix. 14.) is one of the merciful and profound injunctions of the Mosaic law; and Catholic moralists, in applying it to the absent, have shown that they felt the true spirit of a religion which requires, that when a man is bound to combat another, he should do so without abandoning charity on the one hand, or the rules of the nicest courtesy on the other.

Detraction, say some, is a kind of censorship that keeps men in the path of duty. No doubt, but in the same way that a tribunal composed of judges prejudiced against a prisoner, where he was neither confronted with his accusers nor heard in his own defence, where the counsel who undertook his defence would be discouraged and ridiculed, and every charge believed to be true; in the same way that such a tribunal would tend to diminish crime; and

it is a truth, found by experience, that men are accustomed to yield belief to ill-natured reports upon grounds, which, in a question where it was their interest to examine, would fail to exhibit the slightest appearance of probability.

Detraction injures the speaker, the hearer, and but too often, him who is the object of it. Supposing that it lashes an innocent person, (and whatever be the number of human faults, the number of unjust accusations and insinuations is always still greater), what a temptation is it not for him ! Reluctantly determined to tread the thorny path of virtue, he proposed, as his motive, the approbation of men ; he was full of that opinion, so common, and yet so false, that virtue is always known and appreciated : suddenly he sees it disregarded, and he begins to think that it is but an empty name : his soul, hitherto pampered with the cheering and tranquillizing ideas of applause and concord, no sooner tastes the bitterness of being hated, than the sandy foundation, on which his virtue was built, gives way : happy if he be taught by that experience, that the praise of men is no certain reward, nor indeed any adequate reward at all for virtue.

Ah, yes ! if distrust reigns among men, the facility of detraction is one of the principal causes. He who has seen a man put on the smile of friendship while pressing the hand of another, and yet the

moment his back was turned has heard him charge him with evil actions, suggesting motives, entering as it were into the sanctuary of his thoughts, or at least censuring his conduct, must naturally distrust all men; he must believe that the expressions of esteem and disapprobation in their mouths, proceed from baseness or malignity. If, on the contrary, detraction were banished, confidence would increase, and along with it benevolence and peace: if every man when he embraced another, could be sure that he would not afterwards become the object of his censure or derision, he would do so with a readier spirit, a purer and more unrestrained sense of charity.

Many people imagine that a reluctance in supposing the existence of evil, springs from excessive simplicity or inexperience, as if it were a mark of close observation to conclude that every man in every case chose the worst part: whereas, on the contrary, a disposition to judge with indulgence, to examine into hasty accusations, and to compassionate real faults, requires a habit of reflection, not only on the complicated motives that influence human actions, but on the very nature and weakness of man.

He who is informed of the harsh judgment that has been, without sufficient foundation, pronounced against him, feels at once, in the keenest manner, a degree of injustice inflicted from a quarter where he



was far from suspecting it. He has acted in the situation, in which he was placed, under the influence of circumstances, of sentiments, and of opinions, of which he alone perceived all the bearings: with these the detractor was not acquainted, he judged abstractedly of an action by rules, the just application of which he was unable to determine; or perhaps he found fault with a man, because he did not act as he himself would have done, or because he had not the same passions. And even when a man is forced to acknowledge within himself that the censures passed upon him were not void of truth, he is still much more often affected with a feeling of animosity than of any desire of amendment; far from endeavouring to reform himself, he examines into the conduct of his detractor, to see if he can find any weak side open to his recrimination: impartiality is a rare virtue in all, but especially so amongst those who have been offended. Thus are the foundations laid of a miserable warfare, a restless activity in examining and disclosing the faults of each other, which increases the disregard of our own.

Can we then be surprised, that when our interests clash with those of another, there should be so much anger and hostility, and such a propensity to mutual injury? We have been prepared for it by thinking and saying so much about it; we are accustomed in our conversation not to forgive, to



rejoice in the degradation of another, even to injure those who are not our rivals; we treat strangers as enemies, and how is it possible for us to assume the sweetness and the looks, in a moment of trial, that demands all the self-possession of one long inured to restraint? The Church, whose aim it is to establish the reign of fraternal charity, requires men to think no evil, to mourn when they see it, to speak of the absent with that delicate attention which self-love accustoms them to use towards those who are present. To regulate actions, she restrains the tongue; and to regulate this, she sets a watch over the heart.

There are two kinds of religious injunctions, which are sometimes separated and condemned, but which ought, on the contrary, to be united and admired. Of the first kind are constant prayer, watchfulness over the senses, a perpetual striving against the excessive love of this world, a reference of every thing to the glory of God, a mortification of every immoderate desire, and the like. Of such as these it is said that they are miserable, painful restraints upon the freedom of the mind, without conducing to any useful result; practices only fit for the cloister.

Of the second kind are those remedies, distasteful it is true to flesh and blood, but required by justice, and admitting of no exception; remedies which imply sacrifices at once repugnant to the senses; sacrifices, which our servile hearts consider heroic,

but which reason pronounces nothing beyond what strict justice demands. When mention is made of these, we are immediately told that we ought to take men as they are, and not expect perfection from human nature. But it is because religion knows the weakness of the nature in which she is about to operate, that she affords it assistance and strength ; it is because the combat is terrible, that it is her object to make a man's whole life a preparation for it ; it is because we have a mind, which any strong impression disturbs, which the importance and urgency of making a selection between actions, rob of its calm, precisely at the moment when they increase the necessity of it : yes, for this very reason that habit exercises a species of dominion over us, it is that religion would devote our whole life to inure us to command ourselves, to give reason a dominion over the passions, and to secure a lasting and solid peace of mind. From the earliest ages, and by her first Apostles, Religion has been compared to a warfare. Keeping this figure in view, it may be pronounced of him, who perceives not and appreciates not the unity of her maxims and discipline, that he is like the man who would feel surprise that soldiers should be inured to the tactics of war, its fatigues and privations, in the absence of the enemy during a time of peace.

Human systems of philosophy, requiring appa-

rently much less from a man, are in fact beyond comparison more exacting. What is it but a mere nothing that they contribute towards the education of the mind, indisposed as it is for good, while the actions which they prescribe are solitary and isolated : they often require the end without pointing out the means ; they treat men as beings devoid of courage, to whom they speak but of peace ; and yet most inconsistently whom they would conduct, unprepared, into the presence of an enemy the most terrible. But the combat is not to be eluded by keeping it out of sight : the moment of conflict between a sense of duty and motives of interest, between habit and necessity, will come ; and a man suddenly finds himself with a violent inclination that must be overcome, without having ever inured himself to overcome the most trifling feeling. He may have been, perhaps, taught to repress it, from a motive of human interest or sensual prudence ; but now it is precisely interest that renders his position so difficult. The path of virtue has been painted to him as a smooth and gentle path, strewed with flowers : he has been told that he had but to make a choice of pleasures, and now he finds himself placed between justice and pleasure, between a great mortification and a heinous sin. Religion, on the other hand, strengthening her pupil against the senses and sudden surprises, urging him, without ceasing,



to demand those succours which are never refused, imposes indeed a great responsibility upon him; but she has placed him in a situation to fulfil what it requires, and in demanding of him a great sacrifice, she in fact confers upon him an additional boon. Religion, demanding greater perfection in man, demands, in fact, that which is the more easy of accomplishment; it is her wish that he should arrive at a great height; but she has constructed the steps for his ascent; she guides his hand: human systems of philosophy, contenting themselves with a much lower scale, require in fact an undertaking far more arduous; they require a leap, beyond the compass of human power.

And here I think it but fair to state, that I am far from taxing our author with being ignorant of the mischief arising from detraction, or with wishing to undertake its apology; though the natural course of my argument obliged me to prove that the doctrine of the Church was eminently moral and evangelical, and that to speak evil of our neighbour was a sin.

But are we to suppose, therefore, that the object of the Church was to stifle that just judgment which would pronounce between virtue and vice? Certainly not. She wishes to remove proud, frivolous, unjust, and useless accusations, the judgment of the intention which God alone sees, that which is some-



times but indistinctly felt, even in the very heart in which it is conceived ; but as for the judgment to be pronounced upon actions, her object is to regulate, not to suppress it. She even commands it in nearly every case in which she does not condemn it ; that is, when it does not lead us to depreciate or dishonour ; when it is to save our neighbour from the treachery of the wicked, and when justice and expediency demand it. Undoubtedly in these cases Christian prudence is most necessary ; but religion teaches us how to obtain it : guided by this, a man may conduct himself under those difficult circumstances, in which both to be silent and to speak may have some appearance of evil ; in which he has to contend with the evil-minded, and yet at the same time can give no evidence that he is not guided by malevolence.

The sigh of the hypocrite, who speaks evil of the man whom he hates ; his protestations of grief at the faults of the man whose character he is blackening ; his assurances that he speaks but from duty, are a double homage to the conduct and the sentiments which religion prescribes.

But so averse is the Church from imposing silence on the accents of truth, when the uttering of them indeed springs from charity, and so averse is she from the neglect of any means by which men may mutually improve each other, that she con-

demns human respects ; that she herself has given birth to the very word that indicates this disposition of mind. Thus has she provided a remedy for the timid soul against the fear with which force, the imposing multitude of adversaries, their derision, or the long-established sway of worldly maxims might inspire it : thus has she invested with freedom of speech the man to whom the truth is known.

She has also commanded fraternal correction, by a wonderful combination of words, in which the idea of correction, against which our natural feelings revolt, is immediately united with that of brotherhood, which suggests the tenderest sentiments of affection, a sense of our own weakness, and a willingness to receive correction, on the part of Him, who has corrected his brother. So far is religion from preventing any of those advantages that may arise from the free and dispassionate expression of the truth, and from a just discernment between virtue and vice.

Let me here make a reflection, which is implied in many parts of this work, and which I shall treat more at large hereafter. Whenever we think that we find in religion an obstacle to any sentiment, action, or institution, which is just and useful, generous, and tending to social improvement, if we carefully examine the case, we shall

find, either that the obstacle does not exist, and we only thought so from not having sufficiently apprehended the objects of religion, or that the thing itself which appeared so desirable, does not bear the character which at first sight it appeared to have. And not to mention the common delusions which arise from the weakness of our understanding, there is a continual temptation to hypocrisy, from which the purest minds, and those most desirous of good, are not exempt; to an hypocrisy which associates the idea of a greater good and a generous inclination with the desires of our ruling passions: so that when a man examines himself, he will find that he cannot always be sure of the absolute rectitude of his motives, and that he does not always discern how far they may be influenced by pride or prejudice. If, therefore, we condemn the rules of morality, because they appear to fall short of our own views, we run the risk of yielding to improper feelings, the existence of which we are unwilling to acknowledge even to ourselves; feelings which perhaps we combat, although we be unable entirely to subdue them in this life.

Let us observe, in conclusion, that if the increase of distrust were the effect of the prohibition against detraction, it follows, that as this prohibition is preached throughout the whole Catholic

world,\* so either distrust would be increased everywhere, or else the injunctions of the Church are better observed in Italy than elsewhere; which would on the other hand be a proof of a better moral state. I know not whether the Italians be more given to the distrust of one another than other Europeans, but this I know, that they complain of not being enough so; and that, as compared with all other nations, they say that their fault is in being too credulous and confiding. If, however, distrust were universal amongst us, I think it ought to be attributed to any thing but the abstinence from detraction; for unfortunately we are but too far from having eradicated that evil habit.

\* See, for instance, a Sermon by Massillon on Detraction, for Monday the 4th week.



## CHAPTER XV.

## ON THE MOTIVES OF ALMS-DEEDS.

“ La charité est la vertu par l'excellence de l'évangile ; mais le casuiste a enseigné à donner au pauvre pour le bien de sa propre âme; et non pour soulager son semblable.”—P. 420.

To give to the poor for the good of our own soul, is an action and a motive prescribed by the Church.

To exclude from alms-deeds the *intention of relieving a fellow-creature*, is an antichristian refinement, that I am not aware has ever been taught by any one ; at any rate, I believe there is no vestige of it in Italy.

As to the motive, the Church only maintains and promulgates it, such as it has been proposed by Jesus Christ ; and there is, perhaps, no precept in the gospel to which a promise of recompense is so frequently annexed as to this. In the gospel, charity is called laying up treasures in heaven : it is compared to a friend that will introduce us into everlasting habitations ; in the gospel the kingdom

is promised to the blessed of the Father, who shall have fed, clothed, received, or visited, those whom the King in the day of his glory will not disdain even to call his brethren; mindful that he endured privations and sufferings like them; mindful, that even He was treated as a stranger in the eyes of the unthinking rich men of this world.\* The language of the whole sacred volume is the same: *There can no good come to him that giveth no alms.*† What need of further quotations? The very words that are here represented as a precept of the casuists, are those of Scripture: *The merciful man doeth good to his own soul.*‡ Moreover, this is the motive proposed for the fulfilment of all things commanded: nor are the sanctions of religion founded on any other.

By what motive would the man be influenced, who wished to lay aside all idea of reward, and who gave to the poor merely with the view of relieving his fellow-creature? By a desire to benefit his own soul in another sense; for it is impossible for a man to do it from any other motive, and disinterestedness cannot consist in its exclusion.

It will not, I think, be foreign to the argument, or without some advantage, to inquire what

\* Matt. xix. 21. Luke xvi. 9. Matt. xxv. 34, and following.

† Ecclesiasticus xii. 3.

‡ Proverbs xi. 17.

should be the reasonable idea attached to disinterestedness, and to point out at the same time a delusion which has caused this term to be applied in an exaggerated and absurd sense, especially as this inquiry is naturally allied to the question so much agitated at the present time, *viz.* what place interest should hold in morality. The delusion we have mentioned then deserves the greatest attention, both because it has entered into some enlightened minds, and is often mingled with the opinions formed with respect to the motives of actions, and because (if I may be allowed to say so) it is that which has suggested the objection made to Catholic morality in the motives for alms-giving.

The idea of disinterestedness has arisen from the following observations. Man has an inclination for pleasure ; many things that give pleasure are improper ; the man who has it in his power to procure them, may overcome his inclination and abstain from them ; he may always determine on doing what is right, or even what is the most perfect, independent of the pleasure or pain that accompanies it. Again, when a virtuous action carries with it satisfactions of a certain kind, (as sensible pleasure, applause, power, riches, &c., in a word, satisfactions that do not proceed from the improvement of the soul) a man may leave them out of the question, and exclude them from the

motives that determine him to perform that action. This disposition and its application to the conduct of life is called disinterestedness.

But for this disposition to be reasonable, that is, for it to be capable of being demonstrated and reduced to a principle, it supposes the persuasion that the happiness of man consists in justice. Such a persuasion, elevated to the rank of Christian hope, produces contentment in the midst of the greatest sacrifices and trials; not that the soul wishes to remain in such a situation, but under the unavoidable circumstances in which it is placed, and having to choose between a pleasure that injures and prepares it for misery, and a suffering which perfects and prepares it for complete and perpetual joy, it feels that the greatest possible satisfaction, as well as the state most allied with peace and repose, depends upon the choice of the latter.

On the other hand, in order to arrive at that exaggeration of the idea alluded to above, the mind passes through, as it would appear to me, the following train of thought.

When that which is right is so conformable to the inclinations that the mind receives it without opposition, there is no disinterestedness in doing it; for this sentiment only exists in those cases (and they are beyond all comparison the most frequent) where we renounce some pleasure that is within our



reach, or subject ourselves to some pain we might avoid, in order to fulfil what is right or what is the most perfect. The greater and the more universal the renouncement of pleasures, so much the more disinterested, the more virtuous is the determination; and on the contrary, all pleasures which are looked upon as motives will diminish its merit and give it an appearance of egotism; all pleasures or the expectation of them, of whatever kind they be, or whenever expected, every thing that by analysis signifies pleasure, as promise, reward, our well-being or happiness, will render a determination less disinterested, and consequently less virtuous. Here lies the root of the error, here it begins; here we run counter to an eternal law of the human mind, to a condition of the understanding, the love of ourself; here is a perfection proposed which is impossible and contrary to nature. The sense of disapprobation that is attached to the idea of pleasures, has only arisen from the knowledge that many pleasures are opposed to what is right; but to attach this feeling to the abstract idea of pleasure and satisfaction, is to make use of a noble sentiment to authorize an error, is to reject an idea when separated from the only quality that rendered it objectionable.

Because men have applied the name of *interest* to that which signifies temporal goods, because for

the sake of these, strifes have been engendered amongst men, and duties have been betrayed, the word *interest* has been deservedly disgraced; but, removed from the sphere of this life, the idea of condemnation no longer is attached to it, it loses all its degradation, it assumes altogether another meaning, indicating as it does, treasures that partake not of injustice, contention, or deceit, treasures associated with qualities the very opposite.

Deceit, I say, for this is one of the essential conditions that render temporal interests a motive so worthy of our reprobation; for if they be evil they are so because they are false; if they were true and real goods, that is, if they were a means of real happiness, we could not blame the man who attached himself to them; he would make a just application of a law which admits neither of transgression nor resistance, for man is not free in desiring happiness, but in selecting the means to obtain it.

What does the Christian mean by the good of his soul? Looking to a future life, he means by it the enjoyment of perfect felicity, a repose that shall consist in the possession of absolute order, in loving God perfectly, and having no desire but to do his will; to be free from all pain, because free from all inclination to do evil, and from all strife. Looking to the present life, he means that happiness that consists in perfecting ourselves, the beginning and

progress of which is no other than an advancing of ourselves in order, and in the hope of attaining to the other state. This is the sense of that profound instruction that St. Paul gave to Timothy and to us all. "Piety is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) It is impossible to propose nobler ends for the moral conduct of man.

As self-denial and a contempt for pleasures are the continual precept and the spirit of the gospel, it was easy for the human mind, so prone to abuse every thing, to destroy the nature of this spirit by exaggerating it, and to carry the delusion even into religion itself, by imagining that to apply the idea of self-denial to a future life, and thus to carry it beyond the bounds fixed in the gospel, would be to render the gospel perfect. In fact, doctrines of this kind were often brought forward in the Church, but never without being condemned.\*

\* Such was the doctrine, as is well known, which formed the subject of the controversy between Fénelon and Bossuet. The names of the two great opponents have often drawn the attention of posterity to this controversy, and the opinions on it have been manifold and various. That amongst them which declared it to be a frivolous question has, to my mind, the least claim to sense, and yet this was the opinion of Voltaire. (*Siècle de Louis xiv. chap. 38, du Quiétisme*); and certainly, if every enquiry into the motives that influence our will, into duties, and the mode of reducing all the sentiments of the mind to the standard of truth be regarded as frivolous, this will be so too, as it



Never, therefore, must we contemplate the destruction of the love of ourselves; our object must be

is of the same class. But, in that case, what study can be of importance to man? The philosophers who followed Voltaire continued to discuss this point of morality, but in other terms, and they considered it as fundamental. (See among others, Woldemar par Jacobi, trad. de l'Allemand par Ch. Wanderbourg, T. i. page 151, etc.)

The controversy concerning interest as the basis of morality, concerning the love of virtue for its own sake, and a variety of others, may be reduced for the most part to that of quietism; that is to say, to decide whether a desire of our own happiness ought to enter into virtuous resolutions. It seems to me that the question was thoroughly sifted between the two theologians, and that a certain confusion always subsists in the language of other moralists, from the use of the word *interest* in an ambiguous sense, not specifying whether it means what is useful in this life or that which embraces the whole existence of the immortal soul. To those who oppose the morality of interest without explaining themselves clearly on this point, we can always propose this dilemma; you either hold that it is a man's interest to be virtuous, and if so, why do you dispute? Or you do not hold this, and then the command to follow virtue, would be a command to man to injure himself, which is absurd. The error of the others does not consist in pretending that interest and duty should agree, but in pretending that they necessarily do so agree in this life.

In the dispute between these two eminent bishops, nothing less was agitated than the putting the love of God in opposition to a necessary law of the mind, and destroying the harmony between revealed truths, and truths intuitively perceived. It is unnecessary to add, that this consequence was far from Fénélon's intention; and the manner in which he terminated this dispute, the rest of his works, and the whole of his life, are a proof of the sincerity with which he never ceased to protest that he had no intention of proposing or accepting any proposition that should violate the faith of the Church in the smallest degree.



to direct it to a right and noble end instead of one that is false and servile ; this it is that religion has so eminently accomplished ; religion by placing her recompense beyond the present life, has opened to this sentiment a path on which to spend its infinite force, without ever clashing with the most trivial duty. Thus has she been able to carry her follower to the highest degree of disinterestedness, inducing him to renounce not only those pleasures which are directly injurious to others, but also many others, which the morality of the world (in its short-sighted policy) would permit and approve. Hence is it, that Jesus Christ, in suggesting a motive for alms-giving, not only commands the action, but also that we keep it secret ; taking away the human inducement, the love of praise, he substitutes that of reward in a future life. “ Let thine alms be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.” (Matt. vi. 4.)

It was not the object of religion to cure avarice by vanity, nor was it her wish that a man should receive in the present state a reward that is reserved for the other, or that he should reap in the season devoted to its cultivation alone, a harvest which, when cut down, withereth and filleth not the hand. (Ps. cxxix. 6, 7.) She wishes not merely that the poor be relieved, but that souls should be freed, enlightened, and taught endurance.

Of what importance is it, says the world, not unfrequently, from what motives spring actions that are useful, provided they abound? A question this, that betrays a prodigious want of reflection, while it is one to which it is easy enough to reply: is it then a matter of no importance that men should not be diverted from the end of their creation, that they should not be deceived, that they should not be accustomed to the love of those goods, for the sake of which they will one day find themselves forced into a conflict with one another, of those goods, which when enjoyed increase indeed the thirst of possessing them, without giving the power to multiply them; for this admirable power belongs but to those spiritual goods of which Christian happiness is composed.

An objection of an opposite kind has been not unfrequently brought against Catholic morality, namely, that it lays not sufficient stress upon the love of ourself when it commands self-denial, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. But self-denial does not imply a renouncement of happiness, but a resistance to those vicious inclinations which were produced in us by sin, and which would lead us away from true felicity; and to love our neighbours as ourselves is to desire and procure for our neighbours, as far as lies in our power, the same good we would desire for ourselves; that is an eternal and

an infinite good. Worldly desires are directed to finite things, which, generally speaking, are only enjoyed by one man at the expense of others; and whoever proposed them as the objects of his desires, would fall into a contradiction if he attempted to procure them for others as for himself. But religion could prescribe an unlimited love towards our neighbour, because she taught that this love is never in opposition with the love a man owes to himself.

On the other hand, if we take away from almsgiving the motive of relieving a fellow-creature, we establish an isolated doctrine, and one altogether repugnant to Catholic morality. Alms-giving detaches the heart from the love of worldly goods, and at the same time cherishes a sense of charity: these two effects are not only not at variance, but mutually confirm each other.

The human mind finds it, however, so difficult to avoid extremes, that it may be possible some have conceived it more perfect in relieving the poor to stifle the natural feeling of compassion, rather than to sanctify it.

If any have fallen into so mistaken an exaggeration, in Italy, at least as far as I am aware, it is altogether unknown; and when Father Segneri declared that there are but two gates to heaven, that of patiently enduring our own sufferings, and that of compassionating the sufferings of others, he did



but express the universal doctrine of Christian teachers. And the ministers of the gospel, when they exhort us to relieve the poor, always represent to us the misery of their situation; and in denouncing the neglect of this duty they never fail to condemn hardheartedness and cruelty, as dispositions at once unjust and contrary to the gospel.

When Jesus Christ multiplied the loaves to feed the multitudes that followed him, the work of omnipotence was preceded by an ineffable movement of compassion in the heart of the God-man. "I have compassion on the multitude," says he, "because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away empty, lest they faint by the way." (Matt. xv. 32.) And was it for the Church to cease for a single moment to propose the sentiments of Jesus Christ for a model?

Ask the zealous and compassionate priests who visit the cottages of the poor, and after administering with tears of tenderness and consolation to their most urgent wants, find other cases which they can only relieve by mingling their tears with those of the poor man: ask these men if, when they apply to the rich for means to fulfil their charitable intentions, they only speak to them of their own souls; ask them if they speak not of the miseries, the sufferings, the dangers of the destitute; ask them whether those



who listen to entreaties so holy and so touching, listen to them with cold insensibility; ask them whether the image of suffering and of hunger is excluded from those feelings that move them to divide with the poor those riches which are so often a snare, and but the price of pleasures that close the memory and steel the heart against the woes of him who suffers.

Did St. Charles, who took off his own garments to clothe the poor, who lived among those infected with the plague, to render them every assistance, forgetful only of his own danger, think of nothing but the good of his own soul? Did St. Jerome Emilian, who sought out the orphan children of mendicants, to feed and to instruct them, with as much eagerness as an ambitious man would court the education of a king's son, did they, I say, think of nothing but their own souls? And was the thought of relieving their fellow-men altogether overlooked in a life solely consecrated to them? Was it for the man who dwells far from the spectacle of misery to shed a tear at the recital of some tale of woe, and for those whom an insatiable charity urged to seek for the victim of want, and to spend their substance in relieving it, to possess a heart untouched by sympathy?

Passing over the innumerable acts of charity with which the history of Catholicism is filled, I shall confine myself to one which is remarkable as an

instance of delicacy and compassion, and I select it with the more pleasure, because being of recent occurrence, it is a consoling evidence of a spirit which never ceases to live. A lady whom we have often beheld amongst ourselves, whose name we shall repeat to our children—a lady brought up in luxury, but long accustomed to deprive herself of it, and to regard riches only as a means of relieving her fellow-creatures, coming one day out of a country church, after hearing a sermon on the love of our neighbour, visited a miserable cottage, where a poor woman lay sick, whose body was disgusting and loathsome to behold ; not content with rendering her those painful attentions, which even servants deem an act of compassion, but full of an overpowering impulse of charity, she embraced her, kissed her cheek, placed herself by her side, shared the bed of pain and loneliness, repeatedly calling her by the name of sister. (*Life of the virtuous Milanese matron, Teresa Trotti Bentivogli Arconati, pag. 82.*)

Surely the idea of relieving a fellow-creature was not wanting in that Christian embrace ! To eat the bread provided by another's bounty ; to obtain wherewith to sooth the pains of the body, and to prolong a life of suffering, suffices not to relieve the wants of him who is weighed down by the pressure of disease or of misfortune : such an one feels that he requires also sympathy and social communion,

while the solitude wherein he is left, the thought that he is a burthen to his fellow man, the look of the person who renders him assistance, the never seeing a smile, are perhaps the bitterest of his sorrows. But the heart which thinks of these wants and satisfies them, which overcomes the repugnance of the senses, and only regards the immortal soul that suffers and is purified, affords the finest testimony for the doctrines to which it owes its instruction, while it exhibits a living proof, that they never fail to inspire the most ardent and generous feelings of universal charity.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## ON SOBRIETY AND ABSTINENCE, CONTINENCE AND VIRGINITY.

“ La sobriété, la continence, sont des vertus domestiques qui conservent les facultés des individus, et assurent la paix des familles ; le casuiste a mis à la place les maigres, les jeûnes, les vigiles, les vœux de virginité et de chasteté ; et à côté de ces vertus monacales, la gourmandise et l’impudicité peuvent prendre racine dans les cœurs.” Pag. 420.

THE institutions of the Church relative to abstinence are those, which it has been the object of the world to place in a ridiculous light, so much so that many persons, who reverence them in their hearts, speak in their defence with a sort of timid misgiving, hardly daring to call them by their proper names, as though we were to believe that they have no further claim on the deference of reason than what is due to them as emanating from a sacred and incontrovertible authority. But he who sincerely seeks after truth, far from being scared at the sallies of ridicule, should make the ridicule itself an object of examination.

This in the present case has two very distinct



causes; the one is, the aversion the world has to penance, and to every thing that prescribes and (if I may so say) organizes it. The world, unwilling to confess its real motives, associates ridiculous ideas with penance as much as possible, in order to make us believe that it describes in it something contrary to reason: it forgets, or pretends to forget, the spirit and the motive of these prescriptions; and hence it is not ashamed to ask, for instance, of what consequence is it, in the sight of God, whether a man eat one kind of food or another, with other objections equally frivolous.

The other cause is, the manner in which the prescriptions relative to abstinence are followed by many Catholics. The Scriptures and tradition represent fasting as a disposition of detachment, and of voluntary privation, of which abstinence from food is a part, a necessary consequence and an outward expression. When men who are eager in their search after worldly satisfactions of every kind, and enemies to all humiliation and suffering, pharisaically follow this part of penance alone, it is an isolated practice, which, being totally different from the rest of their conduct, does not harmonize with it; thus affording the world an opportunity of following its inclination to turn religion into ridicule. Abstinence from flesh-meat is only a means of observing the fasting prescribed by the Church;

but if this be made a means of refinement, then certainly an exterior observance, an illusive memento, or so to say, an empty boast of penance, which is seen to spring up amidst a life devoted to pleasure and indulgence, presents a contrast between the intention of the law and the spirit of the obedience; between the difficulty of its observance and the merit of it, that affords a subject for ridicule.

But to make every occasion for ridicule vanish from before those who love to reflect, (for there are some men who never cease laughing at a thing they have once thought ridiculous) it will suffice to view abstinence in connection with another order of ideas; placing it in the position and amid the associations which belong to it, in which it was the intention of religion in her enactments to place it: it will suffice to observe it in connection with the conduct of the human mind, with the ends and motives the Church had in view when she ordained it, without forgetting the cases in which it produces its effect, and we shall find, not only that the idea of the ridiculous will quickly vanish, but the beauty, the wisdom, and the importance of these laws, will become evident.

It is a fact as notorious as it is humiliating, that the excess of eating has a degrading influence upon the mind. A series of grave, well-regulated, mag-

nanimous, and benevolent sentiments, may be interrupted by a feast, and a sort of carnal enthusiasm may be produced in the seat of thought itself; an exaltation of the senses, which causes indifference to things of the greatest importance; which destroys or weakens all perception of the beautiful, while it leads to egotism and sensuality. Sobriety preserves the faculties of individuals, as our author has well observed; but this effect is not sufficient for religion, nor is she contented with a virtue which was known also to the heathen: having revealed to man the profound evils of his nature, she has also provided a remedy for them. She beholds in the pleasures of the table, even those which are consistent with sobriety, a sensual tendency, that leads many astray, and she points out the danger before the evil has actually commenced. She commands abstinence as an indispensable precaution for him who has to sustain the war against "the law of his members;" she commands it as an expiation for the faults into which human frailty hurries even the best of us; and also as a source of charity, that the privations of the faithful may serve to satisfy the wants of the necessitous; thus distributing food among men, and causing the sad contrast between profusion without hunger, and hunger without bread, to disappear from the face of Christian society.



These prescriptions being so necessary for mankind at all times, it was fitting that precepts inculcating them should be inculcated by religion, and precisely such has been the case. Among the only people whose civilization was founded on ideas of universal justice, of the dignity of human nature, and of the progress of good, that is to say, in a legitimate worship, these commands existed even from the earliest times of their transition from a state of domestic bondage to that of a nation; and the tradition of fasting has descended from Moses even to our day, as a penitential rite, and a means of elevating the mind to the contemplation of the things of God, and to a steadfast adherence to his law.

In the days of Samuel, the Israelites transgressed; but when they repented and returned to the Lord, and put away the strange gods from among them, they offered sacrifice unto the Lord and fasted.\*

Their idolatry consisted in the adoration of covetousness, and in the excessive enjoyment of earthly delights; and in order to break through the dominion of the sensual appetites, and to return to God, it was necessary to begin by adopting a

\* "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ash-torath, and served the Lord only . . . and fasted on that day."  
1 Sam. vii. 4-6.



course of voluntary privations. Hence, when the children of Israel returned from the land of their oppressors, and were on their way to Jerusalem, the magnanimous Esdras, who led them, prepared them for the journey by prayer and fasting, that he might make them again religious and temperate, separating them from the tumultuous and servile joys of the Gentiles. (1 Esdras viii. 50.)

Fasting is found throughout the Old Testament; and St. John, the forerunner of the new, is both an example and a preacher of it; and He, who was the expectation and fulfilment of the one, the founder and the pattern of the other, and the salvation of us all, Jesus Christ himself, commands it, regulating it and removing from it all hypocritical severity and melancholy ostentation; presenting it in a social and consoling form, teaching its spirit, and setting us an example how we should perform it, (Matt. vi. 16-18). And could the Church need a higher authority than this to warrant her in preserving it?

The apostles were the first to follow it. Fasting and prayer preceded the imposition of hands, that conferred on Paul his mission to the Gentiles, (Acts xiii. 3); and, to use the words of Massillon, "Religion was nursed in the cradle of fasting and abstinence." \*

From that day to this, where can we find any

\* "Sermon sur le Jeûne," for the first day in Lent.

period or interval of its suspension ? All tradition speaks of it constantly ; and although we may find the external observance of fasting joined with an irreligious life, yet it is impossible to find a Christian life that is not accompanied by fasting. Martyrs and kings, bishops and simple believers, follow and love this law. That it should be in force amongst Christians, is but a natural consequence of the principles of their divine religion. We read of Fructuosus, bishop of Tarragona, that as he was led to martyrdom, he refused a draught of liquid that was offered to him to assuage his thirst ; he refused it, alleging that the hour of fasting was not past. —(Fleury, *Mœurs des Chrétien*, 3. *Jeûnes*.) Who does not feel veneration for a law thus revered by a man who was on the point of shedding his blood as a testimony for the truth ? Who does not perceive that fasting itself had assisted in preparing him for the sacrifice, and that, in order to die like Jesus Christ, he had imitated him during his life ?

But setting aside these admirable examples, fasting and abstinence are naturally connected with what is most worthy and pure in the ordinary life of a Christian. If we behold a man just, exact in his duties, active in doing good, bearing unavoidable misfortunes with patience, firm, but not hasty in repressing injustice, tolerant and merciful, we find

the use of abstinence harmonizes with such conduct. St. Paul compares the Christian to one that runs in a race, and who, to obtain a corruptible crown, observes the strictest temperance. (1 Cor. ix. 25.) The agility and vigour it produced in his frame were so evident, and the means so suited to the act, that no one thought that mode of life unreasonable in such an one, or was surprised at it; and shall we who are instructed in the spiritual views of Christianity, blind our eyes to the necessity and the beauty of those institutions which tend to raise the mind above the impulses of the senses?

This is the proper view to take of abstinence; these are its effects, and if the world does not behold them, it is because those who practise them in the spirit of fidelity conceal themselves behind the mantle of humility, and the world cares not to seek for them, but only looks at abstinence when the practise of it presents a contrast to the rest of a man's conduct.

There are transitory institutions, the object of which is only to prepare the way for another order of things, the object of which is no sooner fulfilled than they are removed; there are also those which are so identified with the object in view, that they cannot be abolished; they pass through rebellious or careless generations; remain immoveable in the midst of a people who forget or deride them, waiting for the homage of an obedient and reflecting race of men;



for they are suited to all times. Of this nature are most of the ecclesiastical laws in reference to abstinence (I do not here speak of fasting, for that is of divine institution); of this nature, for example, are the vigils of the Church. To celebrate the commemoration of the great mysteries of religion, and those great events to which the whole attention of the Christian should be directed, and to prepare for it by penance and privations, is an institution so essentially Christian, that its institution is blended with the origin of religion, nor has it ever been for a moment suspended.

Abstinence from flesh-meat is a means prescribed by the Catholic Church to facilitate the observance of penance. If there be any who combine the observance of this ordinance with intemperance and the indulgence of the appetites, it is but one of the many proofs of the ingenuity of man in evading the most salutary laws, while it affords an occasion for reflecting on the danger of riches, of which we have been warned by Jesus Christ, when we behold what a stumbling-block they can produce even in those very means that were provided to effect our salvation. But notwithstanding the outcry and derision that has been so long directed against this precept, the Church has been careful not to remove a monument of her ancient simplicity and rigour, determined not to obliterate all traces of penance for the sake of pleas-



ing her enemy the world. If there be some who elude the force of her precept, there are not wanting some among rich men, who obey with sincerity, and in the spirit of penitence : among the poor also, who are compelled to be temperate, there are not wanting those who ennoble it by a cheerful and ready will, and who find means to mortify their body still more on those days when the Church prescribes a particular fast : such as these she considers her brightest ornament and her chosen sons.

How vain then it is to regard these pious practices as substitutes for sobriety ! far from dispensing with the exercise of that virtue, they but presuppose its existence, while they supply the means for bringing it to perfection.

The same may be said of vows of virginity and chastity in the relation they bear to the virtue of continence : how can they be called a substitute for the latter when they constitute (if I may use the expression) its *beau idéal* ? It is unnecessary to add that virginity, which was praised and recommended by St. Paul, who himself set an example of it,\* while it has been approved and regulated by the fathers of the Church in every age, could not have been the invention of the Casuists.

But if it be possible for immodesty to take root in the heart by the side of chastity, and intemperance

\* Read 1 Cor. vii. c. 25 v. to the end.

by that of abstinence, what does this prove but that the corruption of man is so great that the means provided by the God-man himself have not totally extirpated it; that he has furnished us with arms by which we may conquer, but that he does not dispense with the combat: and who will venture to assert that better means could be provided? It cannot, in my opinion, conduce to any useful end to blame the Church for advising and commanding practices involving the most perfect exercise of a virtue; because the external compliance with such advice or precept is not always accompanied by an interior esteem of that virtue: for this objection to have any weight it would be necessary to prove that sobriety and continence remove from the heart the roots of the contrary inclinations.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## ON MODESTY AND HUMILITY.

“ La modestie est la plus aimable des qualités de l’homme supérieur ; elle n’exclut point un juste orgueil, qui lui sert d’appui contre ses propres foiblesses, et de consolation dans l’adversité ; le casuiste y a substitué l’humilité, qui s’allie avec le mépris le plus insultant pour les autres.” Pag. 420, 421.

I SHALL not here defend the casuists from the reproach of having substituted humility for modesty, or, so to speak, of having invented it ; the former is so expressly commanded in the holy scriptures, that I suppose the phrase which would seem to express this sense, must have another which I have not been able to discover.

I shall dwell, however, on the nature of these two virtues, to show that modesty without humility either does not exist or is not a virtue ; that he who praises modesty either speaks without sense or renders homage to the truth of the Catholic doctrine, because the actions and sentiments which are understood under the name of modesty, derive their whole value from humility, such as it is proposed in this doctrine.

Here we must recur to a general principle of religious morality ; in this, every sentiment that is commanded must be founded upon the absolute truth of an idea. I do not think it necessary to justify this principle, for it is so conformable to reason that it is sufficient but to state it. Applying it at present to the sentiment of modesty, we shall see that this requires two conditions to make it a virtue: it must be the expression of a sentiment not feigned but real, and of a sentiment founded on a truth, in order to be at once both sincere and reasonable.

What is modesty ? is a question by no means easy to answer : when we talk of defining a thing, we should generally mean the specifying the single and unvarying sense which mankind attribute to some word ; but when men differ in the application of a word, how can we give to our definition one unvarying sense, when it does not exist in the idea. In reference to this, an observation of Locke is worth attending to, that the greater number of philosophical disputes have arisen from the different meanings attributed to the same words : "There are few names," says he, "of complex ideas which any two men use to express precisely the same collection of ideas."\* This diversity, or rather latitude of signification, is found more especially in words intended to express moral dispositions.

\* On the Understanding, Book 3. chap. 10. On the Abuse of Words, s. 22.



It is, nevertheless, certain that men understand each other when they hear or use any of these words, and they approximate, if they do not quite agree, as to their signification : if this were not the case they could not argue at all, whence it has been said that there are no disputes about mere words, but that they all refer to ideas. This is explained in my opinion by observing, that in each of these expressions defining moral ideas there is one prominent and general idea which all acknowledge, although there may be indefinite modifications in the application of it, according to the diversity of minds ; in short, an idea which is always uppermost, and governs (so to speak) the assemblage of ideas, to define which, the expression is applied. Now, in reference to the sentiments, actions, thoughts, and that whole behaviour, to express which the word Modesty is made use of, the idea that strikes me as being the predominant one, is no other than a confession that we are at a greater or less distance from perfection ; and in my opinion this is the most accurate definition of it, and that which comprehends the most fully all those cases in which this term is applied. Leaving this for a moment, I arrive at one no less general, and perhaps still more capable of proof ; for I think that in these matters two sorts of definitions may be given ; those which elicit and express the predominant idea we have been alluding to, and

which may be called historical definitions ; and definitions which give the reason of this idea, and by reducing it to precise notions that may be safely applied, limit and fix the sense that men ought to annex to the term they use, if they mean to express a correct idea ; which latter may be called rational definitions. This distinction will appear more clear in the application we shall make of it to our definition of modesty ; for I think a precise one of the second kind may be given.

If the first definition be admitted, I would ask : when a man is praised for his modesty, because he shows a feeling of his own imperfection, is he persuaded of it or is he not ? If he is not, then his modesty, so far from being a virtue, is rather a vice, a fiction, a hypocritical pretence. If he is persuaded of it, he either is right or he is in error ; in this second case he judges from ignorance, or he is deceived ; now that sentiment which a more judicious examination, a greater knowledge of the truth, or an increase of light would induce us to abandon, cannot be a virtue : otherwise we must say that there are virtues opposed to truth, or in other words, that virtue is sometimes a chimera. If then, when we praise a man for his modesty, we do not mean to say he is an imposter or a fool, we are obliged to conclude that his modesty springs from a knowledge of himself, and that in a knowledge of

himself a man may always find abundant cause for modesty ; I say *always*, because otherwise there would be cases in which a man might reasonably entertain a feeling opposed to this virtue, nay, in proportion as he advanced in virtue he ought to divest himself of modesty, since it is certain he would be approaching nearer to perfection : in other words, the improvement of a man would afford a reason for his abandonment of a virtue, which is in fine an absurdity. Now this invariable rule for modesty is found in the twofold idea which Revelation has given us of ourselves, and on which the precept of humility is founded, for that virtue is nothing but an intimate knowledge of ourselves ; and this twofold idea is, that man is corrupt and disposed to evil, and that every thing good in him is the gift of God ; so that every one can say to himself with truth, that which it is his duty to say : “ What hast thou, that thou hast not received ? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ? ” (1 Cor. iv. 7.)

It is for this last reason alone that Jesus Christ, although he was absolutely perfect, was on this very account sovereignly humble ; for, knowing himself in the most perfect degree, and not being subject to those passions which are wont to make men err in their judgment of themselves, he saw with the most perfect clearness that those infinite perfections with which



his human nature was endowed, were the gifts of God.

In its relation, therefore, with mankind at large, we shall give a clear and reasonable idea of modesty, when we define it to be the expression of humility, and the behaviour of a man who feels that he is liable to error and delusion, and that all his good qualities are gifts which he may lose through his weakness and corruption. If we do not suppose this idea, modesty is but the offspring of knavery or stupidity; if we do suppose it, modesty is a virtue and a dictate of right reason: by the aid of this idea we can account for the uniform judgment of mankind in its favour; and this judgment expresses but the natural conclusion of the reasoning faculties.

We praise the modest man, not only because, humbling himself and retiring, he leaves us as it were a wider scope for exalting and exhibiting ourselves, no assuredly we do not praise him merely as a competitor withdrawing from the contest; undoubtedly interested motives arising from our own passions have an influence, of which we ourselves are not always aware; in the approbation or disapprobation we express of others: but if we examine ourselves we shall find that we each possess a disposition to approve, independent of this interested motive, and grounded upon the intrinsic beauty of that which we approve of. Nor would it be difficult to find



examples that demonstrate the reality of this disposition, but that it is unnecessary, inasmuch as every man feels that he possesses it : it is a fact.

We do not praise modesty merely as a rare and difficult quality, for there are bad habits which are only acquired by a few persons, and that with difficulty, and yet no one approves of them.

Nor do we praise modesty only because it combines these two characteristics the useful to ourselves and the difficult of attainment. The old man of the mountain derived an advantage from the credulity and devotion of the individual who, at his signal threw himself down a precipice ; and he could not fail to observe the violent effort that such an act of obedience implied, and yet it was not possible for him to feel esteem for this man, whom he knew better than any one else to be the wretched dupe of his imposture.

But we do both admire and praise the modest man ; because, notwithstanding the strong tendency every body has to esteem himself highly, he has been brought to judge himself with truth and impartiality, and because he has been brought to subject himself to a law which obliges him to render this difficult and painful homage to truth. Modesty in fact, pleases us as a thing at once useful, difficult, and true ; and if we examine all rational ideas concerning it, they will coincide with this one.

*Modesty is one of the most amiable qualities of a superior man*: it is in fact observed to increase in proportion to his superiority; and this is well explained by the ideas suggested by religion. Superiority is nothing more than a great advancement in the knowledge and love of truth: the first renders a man humble, the second makes him modest.

Take an example: a man fears praise and shrinks from it, and he does so though praise is naturally agreeable to our nature, and there appears, at first sight, no impropriety in seeking occasions in which it is spontaneously offered to us. His behaviour in this respect is approved by all those who prize virtue: why so, but because his behaviour is reasonable? The modest man feels that praise reminds him only of the bright part of his character, which is exactly that part which he is most disposed to consider and magnify, while he knows he ought not to look at one side only if he wishes to judge fairly; he feels that praise easily induces him to ascribe to himself that which is the gift of God; to suppose in himself some excellence springing from his own strength, which would be a manifest error; wherefore he avoids it, he conceals his best actions and preserves his noblest sentiments in the secret recesses of his own heart: he knows that whatever induces him to display them is pride and a love of being observed, distinguished, and esteemed—not for what he is, but for something far superior.

But he allows the excellence that is in him to appear, when truth and charity demand it; he renders a testimony of it where he is sure of not deceiving himself or others: the conduct of St. Paul is a splendid instance of this, when the good of his ministry obliged him to reveal to the Corinthians the magnificent gifts of God to him. Constrained to speak of what might extol him in the eyes of others, he gives God all the glory, spontaneously confessing infirmities and miseries the most humiliating in an Apostle, the dignity of whose mission seems to exclude not only the idea of a fall, but even of temptation. In a mind exalted to the sublime intelligence of "hidden words which it is not lawful for man to utter," (2 Cor. xii. 4); who would have imagined that there still survived the strife of the sensual appetite? He himself speaks of it; he descends from the pure and exalted visions of the third heaven, to reveal what he endured on the arena, where he was forced to struggle with carnal temptations: constrained to reveal the secret of his mind, he reveals it whole and entire, that he may be entirely known. (Ibid. vii. etc.)

Modesty then being humility reduced to practice, it can have no fellowship with pride, which is its very contrary; nor can there be such a thing as just pride. The man who feels satisfied with himself, who does not acknowledge he has in him



the law of the members warring against the law of the mind, and who ventures to think he will be able to select that which is best in difficult cases by means of his own strength, is miserably deceived ; the man who puts himself before others is rash ; he is a party, and he makes himself a judge. But if by a just pride we mean merely the acknowledgment of the good that is done, without attributing it to ourselves, or being elevated by it, this will be a lawful feeling, and one which it is our duty to cherish ; humility does not exclude this, for it is humility ; but the contrary conduct is proscribed by Catholic morality as false and presumptuous, because whoever thinks, that when judging himself as he really is, he could have any thing to boast of, any thing in regard to which he must act the part of a hypocrite in order to be humble, is nothing more than a contemptible arrogant being : and it is such a sentiment as this which is rightly denominated pride. Not that I would cavil about a word, but that this has been ever employed to express a sentiment false and vicious in all its degrees. And since the external conduct may in many cases happen to be the same in him who cherishes the feeling of humility, and in him who does not cherish it, it is important to preserve the proper meaning of that word, which is destined to specify that sentiment which we call pride. Pride then can never be just, since it can never be



either a support to human weakness, or a consolation in adversity.

No, these admirable fruits spring from humility alone; it is humility that shields us against our weakness, by reminding us of its existence every moment: that it is which makes us watch and pray to Him who ordains and imparts virtue; that it is "which makes us lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help." (Ps. cxxi. 1.) And in adversity, consolations are reserved for the humble soul that acknowledges herself worthy to suffer, and feels a sense of joy, arising from submission to the divine will. Looking at her faults, adversity appears like the retribution of a God that will pardon, and not like the stroke of a blind power; she increases in dignity and purity, because every pain suffered with resignation cancels some of the spots that rendered her less fair: and what more? She grows to love adversity itself, because it renders her "conformed to the image of the Son of God," (Rom. viii. 29); and, instead of abandoning herself to vain and empty complaints, she returns thanks amid circumstances under which, if she were left to herself, she would utter nought but the lamentation of despair or the cry of revolt. But as for pride! when God shall have humbled the proud man as one stricken and wounded, will pride be any healing balsam for him? To what can it

*with  
Pain*

serve him in the midst of adversities, but to fill him with hatred for them as unjust ; to excite in his breast a restless and painful comparison between that which he would fain persuade himself he deserves, and that which it is his lot to endure ? The secret of the repose of man in this life consists in the conformity of his will with that of God ; and who is further removed from this blessed disposition than the afflicted proud man ?

Pride is loquacious in misfortune, when it finds listeners, and it exhausts itself to prove that things ought not to have been as God has ordained them ; its silence is generally forced, it is bitter, and it dislikes even the feeling of commiseration. The boasted consolations of the man who makes sure of finding within himself a remedy in the midst of adversity, unless they be grounded on resignation and hope, are no better than an artifice of pride, which conceals a state of dejection that might be agreeable to the ill-natured pride of others. God knows what these consolations are : we need only read the "Confessions" of the unhappy Rousseau, to have an idea of them, and to comprehend the state of a heart sick with pride, and calling pride to its aid. He broods over the humiliations he had suffered in society, calls to mind the most trivial circumstances connected with them ; and he who had thought and written so much on the corrup-

tion of his fellow men, had not made up his mind to meet with injustice, and when he met with it his peace and contentment were gone. He draws a comparison between himself and those who have offended or slighted him ; and, finding himself superior to them, he is angry that such as these should have been the men to wound and to slight him : the expressions, the looks, the silence, all are brought forward ; he thinks them over in the bitterness of his soul, and the sufferings of his pride may be conceived by the hatred he expresses for those who have had collision with him. In what colours does he paint them ! The punishment is more severe than the offence : he is certain of having inspired thousands of readers with the same sentiments of hatred and contempt that torment him ; and when he thinks that he is revenged, he exclaims : “ *Cela me passoit et me passe encore.* ” — (Confessions, 2<sup>e</sup> partie, liv. 20.) Yet if ever there were a just pride, according to the views of the world ; if ever a vast and profound mind, and what is still more difficult, one, often independent of prevailing opinions ; if ever the possession of an intoxicating eloquence, an eloquence that carried the excitement of enthusiasm even into souls, for whom there is nothing that they take in earnest but pastimes and pleasures ; an eloquence that could stir up sentiments the most universal and profound,



in breasts where they had been long extinguished by the passions of luxury and of vanity ; an eloquence, that could for some moments burst the inveterate habits of indifference ; an eloquence, that carried men along with it and commanded them, that persuaded them to adopt a truth that had been forgotten or contradicted by the wisdom of a sound judgment, and a falsehood, against which reason revolted ; if a reputation, as rapidly acquired as it was universally diffused, a reputation which, by taking away from the common herd of writers even the idea of rivalry, stifled all their envy, while it enkindled it in those of high name, who flattered themselves that they had nothing more to do than to encourage rising merit, and applaud a success that could not throw a shade upon their own : if, in fine, the contempt of honours and of fortune could furnish a title for a just pride, where was the man who had a better claim to it ?

Amidst all these subjects, I will not say of consolation, but of triumph, what are his sorrows ? He has a friend, a man of the world, who wants to domineer over him, and prescribe to him what he is to do : there is another, whom he formerly patronized, who now, in his turn, wishes to be his patron, and supersedes him at the table of a female friend of the same class.

Ah ! certainly, far be it from us to be niggardly



in the measure of our compassion ; still less ought we to weigh in our own balance the miseries that afflict the heart of another : the man who suffers, knows best what it is he endures ; and though it be the weakness of his mind that exaggerates the evil, this weakness, common as it is to all, is precisely that which deserves a larger share of pity : but when one reflects on the multitude of injustices suffered by the heroes of Christianity ; when one thinks of the persecutions, of the calumnies, the insults heaped without measure on the saints ; when one beholds the joy with which they endured them, the patience with which they expected the manifestation of truth, though they looked not for it in this life ; the delight with which they consoled themselves while alone with God, while their consolation consisted of continual thanksgiving, and all this because they were humble : it is after such a review as this that one is profoundly convinced that the great, the real misfortune of this unhappy man, was no other than his own pride.

Had he learned to behold in the injustice of a few men, the justice of his God, it would have lost all its bitterness : but he expected perfect equity from man, he wished to subject the opinions which others formed of himself to the tribunal of his own mind ; till at last this idea of injustice, ever increasing as he combated it, became the predominant

all-absorbing idea, which he applied to all men; it was a worm that never died. He thought all men were occupied about him, that everybody was his enemy, and that the sole aim of the human race was to render him dishonoured and unhappy. Oh, miserable phenomenon of human nature, by which the principal idea of pride, that of being the object of the attention of others, becomes a source of wretchedness ! He drunk the cup of glory to its dregs ; but how sad, how painful was the intoxication that followed ! The glances of the stranger whom he meets by the way ; the curiosity of his very admirers ; a single word whispered in his presence—all is a conspiracy, all a deep-laid plot !

And if the unhappy man, in describing his anguish, seems at times to calm his mind by an observation of contempt for the vain opinions of others, and of confidence in his own conscience, the very next sentence is sure to exhibit the pain returning in all its force. He writes, to throw off this load of hatred, and appeals to men, all of whom he thinks wicked : but to what hand can he entrust his work, that is not an enemy ? He remembers God, and resolves to seek for justification in the balance of the sanctuary ; but he finds, unexpectedly, the chancel-gate closed, and considers it a sign of repulse from God himself. (See *Histoire du précédent écrit*, annexed to the Dialogues, en-

titled : (*Rousseau juge de Jean-Jaques.*) Unhappy man ! if he had but drawn nigh to the altar as he proposed ; if he had but approached in the sincerity of his heart, remembering that He is there adored who “ opened not his mouth ;” He who was “ as a sheep before her shearers—dumb ;” \* He who says, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest :” † He, whose divinity he had so magnificently confessed : ah ! there would have been consolation even for him, according to the *multitude of his sorrows within him.* ‡ Ah ! yes, if, during the remainder of our life, sufferings and difficulties should await us, if for us the day of trial be drawing nigh, let us pray that it may find us grounded in humility ; so that we be ready to bow with submission under the hand of God, when it shall please Him to smite us.

From what has been said of humility, it necessarily follows, that if there be a sentiment, that would destroy all insolent contempt for our fellow-creatures, that sentiment can be no other than humility. Contempt arises from entering into competition with others, and from giving the preference to ourselves : now it is impossible that such a sentiment can ever take root in a heart taught to

\* Isaiah lii. 7.      † Matt. xi. 28.      ‡ Ps. xciv. 19.

consider and to deplore its own misery; to acknowledge that every virtue proceeds from God, and that, without the restraining power of God, we are liable to fall into all kinds of sin.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE SECRET OF MORALITY—ON SCRUPLES OF  
CONSCIENCE—AND ON SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS.

“ La morale est devenue non seulement leur science,  
 “ mais leur secret (*des docteurs dogmatiques*). Le dé-  
 “ pôt en est tout entier entre les mains des confesseurs  
 “ et des directeurs des consciences.” Pag. 421.

If it were true that confessors in Italy had made a secret of morality, it is clear they would have forgotten that they were commanded to preach on the house-tops, (Matt. x. 27); and the Christian religion, of which the peculiar character is to have no doctrine but what is openly taught, and no mystery that is not equally proposed to all, would have become in their hands like the rites of heathenism, in which only one part of the science is revealed to the initiated, while the other remains a mystery concealed from all but the priests, in order that the imagination of their credulous votaries might conceive the truth of their doctrine, and the entire body of its proofs to lie concealed in that very part which was hidden from them.

But what books are there of ours that are reserved exclusively for the teachers of the Church ?

And how do they manage to transmit the secret? Has not our author said but a little above that la morale proprement dite n'a pas cessé d'être l'objet des prédications de l'Eglise? What is it that the priests speak of from the altar, as well as all the treatises on morality, which it is in the power of every one to consult? What is the object of our catechetical instructions?

"Le fidèle scrupuleux doit, en Italie, abdiquer la plus belle des facultés de l'homme, celle d'étudier et de connoître ses devoirs."—Ibid.

And yet the clergy in Italy declaim against negligence in the study of that law by which we shall all be judged; they never cease to inculcate on parents the obligation of instructing their children in all their duties, and of girding them early with "the sword of the spirit which is the word of God," (Ephes. vi. 17), that they may not be unprepared in the day of battle; and the whole course of Catholic instruction tends to diffuse the maxim, that the endeavour to know his duties, is not only one of the noblest attributes of man, but his very first and most imperative duty.

"On lui recommande de s'interdire une pensée qui pourroit l'égarer, un orgueil humain qui pourroit le séduire."—Ibid.

Who would wish to exculpate the Italian clergy from this charge? If the fact be so, we have only

to desire that it may always be so; that these recommendations may be universal and constant, being as they are the dictates at once of true knowledge and of charity; and that the clergy may never hold any other language, for it is the language of the gospel.

As to the rest, if a Christian be what is called scrupulous, (in the strict sense of the term), the advice which would be given him in Italy as elsewhere, would be not to give way to excessive and tedious reflection on every thought and action, but rather to repose on the cheering and consoling ideas of confidence in God and in his mercy.

With respect to scruples, let me here make two observations, which if they do not apply to the particular point in question, are nevertheless connected with the general argument.

It is a common reflection among Catholic moralists, that scruples arise from spiritual pride. This reflection, no less acute than true, is one of the many proofs of the delicacy and profoundness which religious morality has introduced into the study of the human mind, and the unravelling of the intricate mazes of the passions.

The second observation is, that this moral disease is a proof at once, of the misery of man and of the beauty of religion.

The Christian who is troubled with scruples makes

himself the slave of uncertainty, of trepidation, of restlessness, and of a want of confidence, which are all dispositions but too natural to man, and in some so predominant as to constitute their character. But it is a remarkable fact, that the same anxiety which the miser feels to preserve his wealth, or the ambitious man to maintain and augment his power; the same painful and minute solicitude which so many have for the base objects of their passions, is felt by some Christians, and about what? About the fulfilment of their duties. A tendency towards perfection is so much an attribute of religion that it is manifest even in the errors and miseries of the man who professes it. A mind, so far disturbed by the fear of not being good enough as to lose all its tranquillity, might appear almost a phenomenon of virtue, if Religion herself, so superior to the limited views of man, did not show us that there are dispositions, even in that mind, contrary to faith, to humility, and to Christian liberty; presenting us at the same time with the idea of a virtue, from which every disorderly and inordinate feeling is excluded, and which, the nearer it approaches to perfection, the more it abounds with peace and rational conduct.

“Et toutes les fois qu’il rencontre un doute, toutes les fois que sa situation devient difficile, il doit recourir à son guide spirituel. Ainsi l’épreuve



de l'adversité, qui est faite pour élever l'homme, l'asservit toujours davantage."—*Ibid.*

There is, perhaps, no discovery so repugnant to the pride of man as that in which he finds himself in a state of intellectual dependence; in which he finds he has been, without knowing it, the instrument of a crafty domination, and that he has done, through the impulse of another, what he thought was the result of his own choice and mature deliberation. No sooner does he make this discovery, than all his passions rise up, irritated as it were at the usurpation of their rights, and with a vehemence proportioned to the support they seem to find in reason. For we are sure that it is the will of God that man should aim at perfection by the consideration of his duties, and the free selection of that which is good; and the man who allows the government of his will to be arbitrarily taken from him, abandons the watch over his own actions, for which, however, he will not be the less responsible. The merest suspicion of this weakness will sometimes lead a man to the most inconsiderate thoughts, and he will be ready to exclaim, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Ps. ii. 3.)

It is therefore of the utmost importance to separate the voice of pride from that of reason; to prevent them from dazzling us when united, and to consider

calmly what ought to be the reasonable and dignified conduct of a Christian in this matter.

There are in the priesthood two kinds of authority, which it behoves us to reflect upon; that which comes from God and forms the essence of their mission, the authority of teaching, of binding and loosing; and that which may be given by men from a regard to the first, to this or that priest: this is derived from the veneration and confidence of the faithful, which disposes them to obey the priest, even when he is not engaged in the immediate exercise of his sacred office; but as for the other, it is essential to Christianity, and submission to it, is not slavery, but a duty no less conformable to right reason, than becoming the dignity of man. There is no act of this authority which is not an act of service, in which the priest appears not, but as the minister of a divine authority, to which he bows equally with the rest of the faithful; nor is there one which is repugnant to the freedom of a Christian.

Yes! we do kneel before the priest, and we recount to him our faults; we listen to his corrections and counsels, and we receive our penance from him. But when the priest, trembling in spirit at his own unworthiness, and at the mighty dignity of his functions, has extended over our heads his consecrated hands; when filled with confusion at beholding himself chosen to be a dispenser of the blood of

the New Testament, amazed that he is called upon at every turn to utter words that create life, though a sinner himself he has absolved a sinner, when we raise ourselves from his feet, we feel we have committed no act to degrade : why need we ? Were we prostrate there forsooth to crave for aught of human hope ? was it of himself that we spoke to him ? was the posture of humility assumed in order to rise with still greater pride ? in order to domineer over our brethren ? On what had we conferred but on miseries common to all, on mercies of which all have equal need ? Yes, we knelt at the feet of a man, but he represented Jesus Christ ! we knelt, but it was to lay aside all that tends to debase the soul, the yoke of the passions, the love of the passing goods of this world, the fear of its judgments ! we knelt at the feet of the priest, but it was to purchase the privilege of free men and of the children of God !

As to the second kind of authority, it is founded on the most reasonable principles, but is liable to have and has its abuses. In order to avoid judging rashly on this point, I think a Christian should never lose sight of two facts : the one is, that men may abuse the most sacred things ; the other, that the world often designates even the most sacred things as abuses. When we are accused of superstition, of fanaticism, of an overbearing disposition, or of servility, let us be ready to admit that the



charge may be but too well founded, but having done so, let us carefully examine whether it is or not ; for these charges are often applied to actions and sentiments enjoined by the Gospel.

To recur to our spiritual guide in situations of doubt and of difficulty, is not to become the slave of a man, it is but to make a noble use of our own liberty.

The man who is to be the judge of his own case, and who desires to act according to the divine law, cannot but perceive that his judgment is liable to be warped by interest and prejudice, and he acts the part of a wise man in recurring to a counsellor who, from the nature of his office, must have meditated on the divine law, and be more fitted to apply it without partiality ; in recurring, I say, to a man who should be nourished by prayer, who, from being accustomed to the contemplation of heavenly things, and to self-denial, should have learnt better than another how to weigh things in the balance of the sanctuary.

But a man is always to judge of the advice given to him, and his decision depends on his own conviction ; so true it is that he will be called to an account, not only for this, but also for the choice of his adviser. The Church has never ceased to preach, that ‘ if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch.’ (Matt. xv. 14.)



It is but too true, alas ! that the miserable and opposite tendencies to a servile and overbearing disposition, have strong hold upon our sinful hearts. Weak and irresolute, we like to throw the burden of our souls upon others, and we are contented with any thing that spares us the trouble of reflecting : on the other hand, when a man reposes his confidence in our judgment, we are too fond of extending the dominion of our poor will, and we are tempted to think more of that than of the service we may render to others, and to forget that man was created for a nobler end than to exercise dominion over others. This weakness of human nature may produce evils both in seeking and in giving counsel ; it ought, therefore, to furnish additional motives for confusion and watchfulness in Christians ; but far be it from us to abandon the guides whom God has given us, to cast away ‘ the salt of the earth,’ (Matt. v. 13.) to refuse assistance because there may be danger of abusing it, to see nought but overbearing intriguers among the many zealous and disinterested pastors, who tremble when they advise ; far be it from us to entertain such thoughts, which would tend in a great measure to render of no avail the ministry that was instituted for our welfare.

*Et celui même qui a été vraiment et purement vertueux, ne sauroit se rendre compte des règles qu’il s’est imposées.*

The precepts of the Decalogue; the maxims and spirit of the Gospel; the commandments of the Church, these are the rules which the virtuous Catholic proposes to himself, and of which he can give an account at any moment.

## CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE OBJECTIONS TO CATHOLIC MORALITY, DERIVED FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE ITALIANS.

“ Aussi seroit-il impossible de dire à quel degré une  
 “ fausse instruction religieuse a été funeste à la morale  
 “ en Italie. Il n’y a pas en Europe un peuple qui soit  
 “ plus constamment occupé de ses pratiques religieu-  
 “ ses, qui y soit plus universellement fidèle. Il n’y en  
 “ a pas un qui observe moins les devoirs et les vertus  
 “ que prescrit ce christianisme auquel il paroît si at-  
 “ taché. Chacun y a appris non point à obéir à sa con-  
 “ science, mais à ruser avec elle ; chacun met ses pas-  
 “ sions à leur aise, par le bénéfice des indulgences, par  
 “ des réservations mentales, par le projet d’une pénit-  
 “ tence, et l’espérance d’une prochaine absolution ; et  
 “ loin que la plus grand ferveur religieuse y soit une  
 “ garantie de la probité, plus on y voit un homme scru-  
 “ puleux dans ses pratiques de dévotion, plus on peut  
 “ à bon droit concevoir contre lui de défiance.”

Page 421-22.

HERE we have, in a few words, a pretty severe and positive censure ! The Italians, as a people, are the least faithful to the duties and virtues of Christianity, and are therefore the worst people in Europe. And amongst them the worst are those who most scrupulously observe the practices of devotion !

It is not my intention to confute this opinion, or to make an apology for Italy in this place, still less a comparative apology ; a method in which it is a difficult task to collect the materials necessary to support the opinion we hold, and still more difficult, perhaps, to possess the necessary impartiality.

But this sweeping judgment is here pronounced in order to prove the erroneous nature of the religious instruction given in Italy : moreover, it is neither confirmed by reasoning, nor by facts, but is put forth as if it were self-evident. Now, I think that a charge of so awful and complicated a character ought not to be so easily taken for granted, I shall therefore briefly state what I think a man ought in fairness to do before he admits it.

The Italian Catholic, when he hears his countrymen charged with being the least Christian and the least virtuous, of any European people, should observe, that it is necessary to reflect upon censures in the same way as upon praises, because they both proceed from fallible men, and from men subject to passions ; he will observe, that to believe implicitly all the ill that is said of that which it is our interest to esteem, is no such sure mark of an impartial judgment : he will reflect, that the more simple and precise a comparative judgment of an intricate case is, the more incumbent upon us it is to examine it closely, inasmuch as this simplicity and precision is



easily found in the judgments of men, but very rarely in the things judged: he will compare this judgment with the notions he has formed of his own and of other nations, and of these he will endeavour to procure as many, and as correct, as possible. If, from these researches, he finds himself able to arrive at a well-grounded conclusion (no easy task, when a nation is represented in one book as the sanctuary of every virtue, and in another as the very sink of vice, and when each book has obtained great celebrity); if he shall be able to see all this himself, impartially to weigh conflicting evidence, disregarding what proceeds in this from error and passion, while he steers clear of these faults himself; if, after all this, his judgment be unfavourable to his own nation, he will not be grieved to find, if he be a true Catholic, that many virtues exist among other nations; what will grieve him, will be, that his own is destitute of them. He will then investigate the causes of this perversion: let him begin, if you please, with religion. The result of his enquiry will be, that there is no virtuous sentiment or action that is not prescribed by Catholic morality, and no vicious sentiment or action that is not forbidden, and that any defects in the teaching or practice of it can only be diminished by a more exact study, and a more sincere observance of its commands.

But, whoever admitted a charge of this serious importance, without entertaining these doubts, and without making the researches we have mentioned, and, whoever hastily attributed to religion this supposed pre-eminence of Italy in evil, might perhaps feel a satisfaction in condemning a religion of which he disapproved, and which he regarded, not as opposed to the passions, but as a cause of perversion; still would it be ever true, that he had acted with an inexcusable levity, and that he had placed an absurd reliance on the authority and the declaration of an individual, in a case where nothing could dispense him from the duty of examining and judging for himself; while by so doing, he had exposed himself to the danger of taking this condemnation even in a more extensive sense than he who pronounced it had ever intended, for surely when he wrote *chacun y a appris non point à obéir à sa conscience, mais à ruser avec elle, chacun met ses passions à leur aise, etc.*, he did not mean literally every Italian. He did not mean that there was not one amongst us, who sincerely obeyed his conscience; not one of us who could either hope to have a virtuous friend, or to be one himself! and that the joyful emotions of esteem and of confidence, and that the pure delight a man experiences, when pressing the hand of another he feels that there is a heart which beats in unison with his own, was to be for ever denied

to us ! Whoever took the phrases I have quoted literally, would be called unfair, and would be told that these things are to be understood with due allowances; that he who does not discern what is hyperbolical in an expression, exhibits either an ignorance of the common mode of speaking, or an exceedingly disputatious turn ; that the author, in other sentences of the same chapter, has spoken of the Italians in a manner that forbids a literal interpretation in this case.

But does it not follow then, that if it be reasonable to exclude from this sentence the sweeping and general sense it seems to convey, it is equally so to exclude from it the consequences, that he would fain derive from it, unfavourable to Catholic doctrine ; and let him who admits this sentence to be an hyperbole (as all must admit it), take care how he founds an opinion in so weighty a matter upon a mere hyperbole.

Of the same class is, undoubtedly, the other assertion, that the more exact a man is in the practices of devotion, the greater reason have we for mistrusting him.

Certainly, external practices are not the most difficult part of religion, and they may be performed without a due correspondence of the heart and conduct. Hence, these alone are not enough to testify sincerity ; but why should they be



enough to disprove its existence? Because hypocrisy imitates the works of virtue, is that any proof that wherever these are found, they are a sure test of hypocrisy?

Were this the case there would be no line of conduct left for a Catholic to pursue; for if he neglected all practices of devotion, he might be justly accused of not being faithful to his law; and if he did not neglect them, he would deserve to be treated with suspicion!

Doubtless there may be two motives for their performance, that of deceiving ourselves or others, and that of doing our duty; of participating in the fruits of faith, and of sanctifying ourselves: what reason have we for thinking that the latter, which is the motive for which they were instituted, should never operate in Italy?

It is not, however, worth my while to prove that it does operate, or that there are, amongst us, men who are governed by such high motives, men to whom we could not refuse our confidence, without entertaining the horrid disbelief of the very existence of virtue; men who quit the temple where they have been pouring forth their prayers, with hearts more humane, more disinterested, more firm, more sincere, more courageous in combating themselves; men who return from the sacraments confirmed, and, as it were, renovated in virtue. Let us look around us,



before we think ourselves authorized to reject the practices of devotion, and to condemn religious fervour, because it is not an unfailing guarantee of sincerity ; and our eyes will soon light upon one of those men, who will one day rise up in judgment against us, and who are a living testimony of the beauty of Catholic Morality, and of the possibility of reducing it to practice.

Deo Gratias.

FINIS.















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